THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

CLASSIC TALES BY
FAMOUS AUTHORS

COMPLETE IN

TWENTY VOLUMES

VOLUME XX

Classic Tales

by

Famous Authors

Oliver Goldsmith

Photogravure. From a Rare Print

Classic Tales
by
Famous Authors

CONTAINING COMPLETE SELECTIONS FROM THE WORLD'S BEST AUTHORS WITH PREFATORY BIOGRAPHICAL AND SYNOPTICAL NOTES

Edited and Arranged by

FREDERICK B. DE BERARD

14539

With a General Introduction by

ROSSITER JOHNSON, LL.D.

Published by

THE BODLEIAN SOCIETY

NEW YORK

JAN 1906

Copyright 1902
Copyright 1905
by
The Bodleian Society

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Critical Synopsis of Selections . . .	iii
Biographical Dictionary of Authors . .	xiii

Peg Woffington	*Charles Reade*	9
Stage-Land	*Jerome K. Jerome*	199
The Rivals . .	*Richard Brinsley Sheridan*	267
She Stoops to Conquer . .	*Oliver Goldsmith*	363
General Index of Authors		447
General Index of Subjects		457
General Index of Selections		467
General Synoptical Index		477
General Biographical Index		485

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Oliver Goldsmith	*Frontispiece*
Rose Coghlan as "Peg Woffington" . . .	9
Jerome K. Jerome	199
Richard Brinsley Sheridan	267
Mrs. Drew as "Mrs. Malaprop"	277
Joseph Jefferson as "Bob Acres"	351

CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

PEG WOFFINGTON: BY CHARLES READE:

Ernest Vane, a country gentleman of Shropshire, going to London on business, becomes fascinated with the beauty and wit of *"Peg"* (Margaret) *Woffington,* the brilliant Covent Garden actress of the middle eighteenth century. He tarries long in London, gains her acquaintance, makes his addresses with timid ardor and sincerity, and wins her love. This brilliant woman has a past which she has not endeavored to conceal. Her morals are those of the time and the stage; but she is not depraved; her nature is essentially noble, and she yearns for the sincere love of a kindred nature. She believes in *Ernest Vane,* and is filled with tender anticipations of a happy future.

But *Ernest Vane,* though sincere, has deceived her; he cannot bestow the honest love which she covets, but only the guilty love which she seeks to escape, for he is already a married man! He has left behind him in the country a charming young wife whose existence he has concealed from the actress.

Nor does *Mrs. Vane* know aught of her husband's infatuation for *Mistress Woffington.* Distressed at her husband's long absence, *Mrs. Vane* follows him to London, and finds him entertaining a gay party of guests at dinner, among whom is *Mistress Woffington.* It dawns but slowly on the stricken wife that her husband's love has strayed from her; to the actress, the keen woman of the world, the instant sense of the bitter deception of which she has been the victim brings a whirlwind of rage, jealousy and despair at the downfall of her vision of a true and happy life.

For a moment the demon of revenge prompts her; she will seemingly yield to *Vane's* urgings, tempt him to the utmost extreme of passion, fly with him, and then discard him with the bitterest scorn and contempt.

But *Mistress Woffington* has a heart. She cannot punish the weak lover without crushing the innocent and heartbroken wife. The gentleness and anguish of the simple country lady awakens her sympathy; and she abandons revenge, hides her own bruised heart, and teaches her innocent rival the way to a renewed hold upon the affections of her repentant husband.

RIVALS, THE: BY RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN:

The author of "The Rivals" was born and reared in the atmosphere of the theater. His father was an actor and manager, his mother a writer of successful plays, his wife a singer of high rank on the concert stage. Both of Sheridan's parents were witty, intellectually brilliant and highly educated. The son inherited their qualities, and his fine natural endowment was likewise fully developed by excellent schooling. It was natural, therefore, that his literary powers should find expression in dramatic writing; and he brought to that work the very uncommon equipment of thorough knowledge of stagecraft combined with literary creativeness.

It was because of this combination that Sheridan's earliest plays were brilliant and instant stage successes and have continued to hold a high place in popular esteem. Stage effects—situations that would "take" with audiences—were his primary aims, and the literary quality is not regarded except as an accessory to dramatic expression by action and situation.

"The Rivals" was Sheridan's first play, written when he was twenty-three years of age, and first played at Covent Garden, Jan. 17, 1775. Its extraordinary popularity was due not alone to intrinsic merit, but to the circumstance that it marked the beginning of a healthy reaction against the false sentiment then current in literature and drama. The tiresome inanities of the day, compounded of trivial thought dressed in pompous and stilted

phrases, were brilliantly ridiculed by "The Rivals," whose immortal *Mrs. Malaprop* delightfully travesties their inflated language and affectation of feeling. Her majestic sentences and unconscious substitution of sound for sense, is a witty satire upon the bombast and Johnsonian ponderosity then current.

The mawkish sentimentality which novelists and playwrights deemed indispensable in the portrayal of lovers is also ridiculed in the characters of *Faulkland, Julia* and *Lydia.* To these inane types of the preposterous artificiality which then ruled the comedy stage, Sheridan opposed three strikingly genuine personalities, creations of flesh and blood, bubbling with humor, full of humanity, abounding in natural feeling, and the very antithesis of false sentiment. *Bob Acres, Mrs. Malaprop* and *Sir Lucius O'Trigger* are delightfully human, and the interest of the play centers about them as admirable delineations of character and true types of the modern comedy of manners.

The rivals are *Bob Acres* and an imaginary *Ensign Beverly, Captain Absolute* and *Sir Lucius O'Trigger,* all of whom seek the hand of *Lydia Languish. Acres,* being discarded in favor of *Beverly* (who is known only to *Lydia,* but is in reality *Captain Absolute*), is persuaded by *Sir Lucius O'Trigger* to challenge *Beverly*; and *Sir Lucius* himself challenges *Captain Absolute. Bob Acres* is an awkward young country squire of the type depicted by Fielding. There is no more laughable situation in the whole range of comedy than the challenge and duel. The witty Irish fire-eater inflames the gawky *Acres* to a sense of injury, instructs him in the niceties of dueling, and finally reduces him to a state of abject misery by the assurance that "in case of an accident" he can depend upon being pickled and sent home in a barrel. As there is no *Beverly, Acres* is relieved from fighting, to his intense relief and the enormous disappointment of *Sir Lucius.* The latter is likewise deprived of the expected pleasure of shooting *Captain Absolute* by the discovery that *Sir Lucius* had unwittingly paid his addresses to *Mrs. Malaprop,* the aunt, instead of to *Lydia,* the niece,

and thus none of the rivals remained to dispute the *Captain's* claim.

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER; OR, THE MISTAKES OF A NIGHT: BY OLIVER GOLDSMITH:

This delightful comedy was played for the first time in 1772, at Covent Garden—but one year before Goldsmith's death. It was the precursor of the modern comedy of ma[illegible]nd was quickly followed by Sheridan's bri[illegible]omedies.

In that day, stage parent[illegible]were seemingly stern autocrats who selected mates for their children without consulting the latter's inclination. The young folks likewise admitted the duty of obedience, but in comedies usually found out some way of following their own inclinations and thereafter reconciling their exasperated elders to the inevitable. Not infrequently, indeed—in stage-land, at least—the young people thus betrothed by their parents were personally unknown to each other; and the various mistakes of identity and misadventures which resulted were an unfailing resource of comedy.

Such errors supply the motive of "She Stoops to Conquer." *Charles Marlow* is to marry *Kate Hardcastle*, the daughter of his father's old friend. The match has been arranged by the parents solely on the strength of their long-standing friendship; and the young man is a stranger to both *Kate* and her father. *Mrs. Hardcastle* is guardian to her niece, *Constance Neville*, whom she intends shall marry *Tony Lumpkin*, her son by a former marriage; but *Constance* is secretly betrothed to *George Hastings*, a friend of *Marlow's*, and likewise not known to the *Hardcastles*. The two friends are traveling down to the country—*Marlow* to present himself to his prospective bride and her family, and *Hastings* to plan an elopement with *Constance*.

Having lost their way at night, they make inquiries at "The Three Pigeons" ale-house, where they encounter *Tony Lumpkin*, a boisterous, noisy, mischievous young lout, who delights in roaring carouses and practical jokes. He learns the identity of the strangers, and plans a joke on them. Tony informs them that they are far astray, and

cannot possibly find their way at night; and advises them to stop at the inn to which he directs them, the supposed inn being *Mr. Hardcastle's* house. They deport themselves with the utmost freedom, give orders to their astounded host, and *Marlow* makes love to *Kate,* believing her the bar-maid. *Mr. Hardcastle* is scandalized at the seeming insolence and rakishness of *Marlow*; and *Tony* is hugely delighted at the various funny mystifications which ensue.

In due time Marlow discovers that the supposed inn is Hardcastle Hall, the host is *Mr. Hardcastle,* and the bar-maid with whom he has made free is *Kate Hardcastle,* to whom he is betrothed. While he makes his peace, the ingenious *Tony* is thwarting his fond mamma's plan of wedding him to his detested cousin *Constance* by helping *Hastings* to elope with her. Finally both pairs of lovers are happily disposed of to the satisfaction of all except *Mrs. Hardcastle.*

STAGE-LAND: BY JEROME K. JEROME:

In theory the drama is assumed to depict life—

To hold, as 't were,
The mirror up to Nature!

But stage-craft has its own ideas of Life and Nature, and the stage-mirror seldom reflects pictures identical with those drawn by commonplace observation and experience. In effect, dramatic art reflects Nature by rule rather than by inspiration, and is systematic rather than imaginative. Hence Stage-Land is governed by stage conventions, and its people inspired by stage directions and traditionary "business," which looks to effectiveness, to the frequent disregard of actuality.

In his clever skit, "Stage-Land," Mr. Jerome has wittily satirized the manners and customs of the stage. He "holds the mirror up to" stage folk, and the reflection which he shows is funnily different from the realities of life. He discourses entertainingly of stage heroes and heroines, adventuresses

and old family lawyers, comic men and chambermaids; remarks upon the characteristic qualities and inflexible traditions of each, and makes it clear that Stage-Land is a domain apart, peopled by a race with tastes, feelings and manners quite unlike those of the everyday world.

EDITOR.

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AUTHORS

Vol. 20—1

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AUTHORS

GOLDSMITH, OLIVER: One of the most versatile and genuine men-of-letters of the middle eighteenth century, deservedly esteemed as a poet, novelist, dramatist, historian and essayist. Goldsmith was born in County Longford, Ireland, Nov. 10, 1728; died at London, April 4, 1774. He was graduated at Trinity College, Dublin, 1749, studied medicine at Edinburg in 1752, and for several years thereafter led a miserable wandering life, seeking subsistence as a schoolmaster, tutor, or otherwise. After wandering over the Continent, he returned to London in great destitution and earned a precarious living by his pen. In 1759 his literary worth won attention, and he was thereafter recognized as one of the literary lights of the day. A prolific and industrious writer, the list of his works is long, many of them ephemeral and others publishers' hackwork: but "The Vicar of Wakefield" (1766), "She Stoops to Conquer" (1774), and some of his briefer poems give him an unquestioned place among English authors of enduring fame. Goldsmith was a most prolific contributor to the periodical literature of his day. His historical works comprise "A History of England" (1764), "The Roman History" (1769), "The History of England from the Earliest Times, etc." (1771), "A History of the Earth and Animated Nature" (1774). Among his distinctively creative works are: "Enquiry Into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe" (1759), "The Citizen of the World, etc." (1762), "The Traveler" (1762), "The Good-Natured Man" (a comedy, 1768), "Retaliation" (a poem, 1774), and others. He

translated Scarron's "Comic Romance," and (with Joseph Collyer) an abridgment of Plutarch's "Lives" in 1762. His most famous poem, "The Deserted Village," appeared in 1770. "The Famous History of Little Goody Two Shoes" is attributed to him.

JEROME, JEROME K.: A contemporary English journalist and author. He has been a prolific contributor to magazine literature, editor of "The Idler," and has written several minor acting plays. He is a bright and pleasing writer, his place in the day's literature having been won by the humorous and often satiric fancy of "Three Men in a Boat," "Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow," and "Stage-Land." These are a combination of extravaganza, fanciful essay, sparkling wit, and shrewd observation.

READE, CHARLES: (For Biographical Note, see Vol. II, Famous Tales of the Sea.)

SHERIDAN, RICHARD BRINSLEY BUTLER: An eminent British playwright, theatrical manager, politician and orator; born at Dublin, Sept. 30, 1751; died at London, July 7, 1816. Sheridan was educated at Harrow. He settled in London when he was 22 years of age, and married Miss Linley, daughter of a musical composer then prominent. His taste inclined him to the stage, and his brilliant and incisive wit impelled him to dramatic composition. In 1775 he produced his first play, "The Rivals"—a comedy notable for its sparkling wit, raciness, literary quality, and technical excellence as a stage play. It won instant fame and fortune for its author. In 1776 he bought Garrick's share of the Drury Lane Theater; and two years later, in company with others, he acquired full control of that famous theater, to which, as manager, he gave new luster, by a series of dramatic successes, including his own famous plays, "The School for Scandal" (1777) and "The Critic" (1779). His other plays are: "St. Patrick's Day" (1775); "The Duenna" (1775); "A Trip to Scarborough" (1777; adapted from Vanbrugh's "Relapse"); and "Pizarro" (1790; a translation from Kotzebue).

Sheridan entered Parliament in 1780; was Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in 1782; Secretary of the Treasury in 1783; and Treasurer of the Navy in 1806. He was one of the foremost orators of the day; a political leader of the Whig party; a brilliant wit and man of fashion; and a favorite member of the coterie whose society was affected by the Prince Regent, later George IV. Sheridan's later years were clouded by impaired powers, debt, and disappointment.

EDITOR.

PEG WOFFINGTON

Portrait of Rose Coghlan as "Peg Woffington"

PEG WOFFINGTON

By Charles Reade

CHAPTER I

4539

ABOUT the middle of last century, at eight o'clock in the evening, in a large, but poor, apartment, a man was slumbering on a rough couch. His rusty and worn suit of black was of a piece with his uncarpeted room, the deal table of home manufacture, and its slim, unsnuffed candle.

The man was Triplet, scene-painter, actor and writer of sanguinary plays, in which what ought to be, viz., truth, plot, situation and dialogue were not; and what ought not to be, and were: *scilicet,* small talk, big talk, fops, ruffians, and ghosts.

His three mediocrities fell so short of one talent, that he was sometimes *impransus.*

He slumbered,—but uneasily; the dramatic author was uppermost, and his "Demon of the Hayloft" hung upon the thread of popular favour.

On his uneasy slumber entered, from the theatre, Mrs. Triplet.

She was a lady who in one respect fell behind her husband,—she lacked his variety in ill-doing; but she recovered herself by doing her one thing a shade worse than he did any of his three. She was what is called, in grim sport, an actress; she had just cast her mite

of discredit on royalty by playing the Queen, and had trundled home the moment the breath was out of her royal body. She came in rotatory with fatigue, and fell, gristle, into a chair; she wrenched from her brow a diadem and eyed it with contempt, took from her pocket a sausage and contemplated it with respect and affection, placed it in a frying-pan on the fire, and entered her bedroom, meaning to don a loose wrapper and dethrone herself into comfort.

But the poor woman was shot walking by Morpheus, and subsided altogether; for dramatic performances, amusing and exciting to youth seated in the pit, convey a certain weariness to those bright beings who sparkle on the stage for bread and cheese.

Royalty, disposed of, still left its trail of events. The sausage began to "spit." The sound was hardly out of its body, when poor Triplet writhed like a worm on a hook. "Spitter, spittest," went the sausage. Triplet groaned, and at last his inarticulate murmurs became words: "That's right, pit; now that is so reasonable,—to condemn a poor fellow's play before you have heard it out." Then, with a change of tone, "Tom," muttered he, "they are losing their respect for spectres; if they do, hunger will make a ghost of me." Next, he fancied the clown or somebody had got into his ghost's costume.

"Dear," said the poor dreamer, "the clown makes a very pretty spectre, with his ghastly white face, and his blood-bolted cheeks and nose. I never saw the fun of a clown before— No! no! no it is not the clown, it is worse, much worse; oh dear, ugh!" and triplet rolled off the coach like Richard the Third. He sat a moment on the floor, with a finger in each eye; and then finding he was neither daubing, ranting, nor deluging earth with "acts," he accused himself of indolence, and sat down to write a small tale of blood and

bombast. He took his seat at the deal table with some alacrity, for he had recently made a discovery.

How to write well, *rien que cela.*

"First, think in as homely a way as you can; next, shove your pen under the thought, and lift it by polysyllables to the true level of fiction" (when done, find a publisher—if you can). "This," said Triplet, "insures common sense to your ideas, which does pretty well for a basis," said Triplet, apologetically, "and elegance to the dress they wear." Triplet then, casting his eyes round in search of such actual circumstances as could be incorporated on this plan with fiction, began to work thus:—

TRIPLET'S FACTS	TRIPLET'S FICTION
A farthing dip is on the table.	A solitary candle cast its pale gleams around.
It wants snuffing.	Its elongated wick betrayed an owner steeped in oblivion.
He jumped up and snuffed it with his fingers. Burned his fingers, and swore a little.	He rose languidly, and trimmed it with an instrument that he had by his side for that purpose, and muttered a silent ejaculation.

Before, however, the mole Triplet could undermine literature and level it with the dust, various interruptions and divisions broke in upon his design, and, *sic nos servavit* Apollo. As he wrote the last sentence, a loud rap came to his door. A servant in livery brought him a note from Mr. Vane, dated Covent Garden. Triplet's eyes sparkled, he bustled, wormed himself into a less rusty coat, and started off to the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.

In those days the artists of the pen and the brush ferreted patrons, instead of aiming to be indispensable

to the public, the only patron worth a single gesture of the quill.

Mr. Vane had conversed with Triplet, that is, let Triplet talk to him in a coffee-house; and Triplet, the most sanguine of unfortunate men, had already built a series of expectations upon that interview, when this note arrived. Leaving him on his road from Lambeth to Covent Garden, we must introduce more important personages.

Mr. Vane was a wealthy gentleman from Shropshire, whom business had called to London four months ago, and now pleasure detained. Business still occupied the letters he sent now and then to his native country; but it had ceased to occupy the writer. He was a man of learning and taste, as times went; and his love of the Arts had taken him some time before our tale to the theatres, then the resort of all who pretended to taste; and it was thus he had become fascinated by Mrs. Woffington, a lady of great beauty, and a comedian high in favour with the town.

The first night he saw her was an epoch in the history of this gentleman's mind. He had learning and refinement, and he had not great practical experience, and such men are most open to impression from the stage. He saw a being, all grace and bright nature, move like a goddess among the stiff puppets of the scene; her glee and her pathos were equally catching, she held a golden key at which all the doors of the heart flew open. Her face, too, was as full of goodness as intelligence; it was like no other face,—the heart bounded to meet it.

He rented a box at her theatre. He was there every night before the curtain drew up; and I am sorry to say, he at last took half a dislike to Sunday—Sunday "which knits up the ravelled sleave of care," Sunday, "tired nature's sweet restorer"—because on Sunday there was no Peg Woffington. At first he regarded her as a being of

another sphere, an incarnation of poetry and art; but by degrees his secret aspirations became bolder. She was a woman; there were men who knew her,—some of them inferior to him in position, and, he flattered himself, in mind. He had even heard a tale against her character. To him her face was its confutation, and he knew how loose-tongued is calumny; but still—!

At last, one day he sent her a letter, unsigned. This letter expressed his admiration of her talent in warm but respectful terms; the writer told her it had become necessary to his heart to return her in some way his thanks for the land of enchantment to which she had introduced him. Soon after this, choice flowers found their way to her dressing-room every night, and now and then verses and precious stones mingled with her roses and eglantine. And oh! how he watched the great actress's eye all the night; how he tried to discover whether she looked oftener towards his box than the corresponding box on the other side of the house.

Did she notice him, or did she not? What a point gained, if she was conscious of his nightly attendance; she would feel he was a friend, not a mere auditor. He was jealous of the pit, on whom Mrs. Woffington lavished her smiles without measure.

At last, one day he sent her a wreath of flowers, and implored her, if any word he had said to her had pleased or interested her, to wear this wreath that night. After he had done this he trembled; he had courted a decision, when, perhaps, his safety lay in patience and time. She made her *entrée;* he turned cold as she glided into sight from the prompter's side; he raised his eyes slowly and fearfully from her feet to her head; her head was bare, wreathed only by its own rich glossy honours. "Fool!" thought he, "to think she would hang frivolities upon that glorious head for me." Yet his disappointment told him he had really hoped it; he would not have sat

out the play but for a leaden incapacity of motion that seized him.

The curtain drew up for the fifth act, and—could he believe his eyes?—Mrs. Woffington stood upon the stage with his wreath upon her graceful head. She took away his breath. She spoke the epilogue, and as the curtain fell she lifted her eyes, he thought, to his box, and made him a distinct, queen-like curtesy; his heart fluttered to his mouth, and he walked home on wings and tiptoe. In short—

Mrs. Woffington, as an actress, justified a portion of this enthusiasm; she was one of the truest artists of her day; a fine lady in her hands was a lady, with the genteel affectation of a gentlewoman,—not a harlot's affectation, which is simply and without exaggeration what the stage commonly give us for a fine lady; an old woman in her hands was a thorough woman, thoroughly old,—not a cackling young person of epicene gender. She played Sir Harry Wildair like a man, which is how he ought to be played (or, which is better still, not at all), so that Garrick acknowledged her as a male rival, and abandoned the part he no longer monopolized.

Now it very, very rarely happens that a woman of her age is high enough in art and knowledge to do these things. In players, vanity cripples art at every step. The young actress who is not a Woffington aims to display herself by means of her part, which is vanity; not to raise her part by sinking herself in it, which is art. It has been my misfortune to see——, and——, and——, and——, et ceteras, play the man. Nature, forgive them, if you can, for art never will; they never reached any idea more manly than a steady resolve to exhibit the points of a woman with greater ferocity than they could in a gown. But consider, ladies, a man is not the meanest of the brute creation; so how can he be an unwomanly female? This sort of actress aims not to give her

author's creation to the public, but to trot out the person instead of the creation, and show sots what a calf it has —and is.

Vanity, vanity! all is vanity, Mesdames les Charlatanes.

Margaret Woffington was of another mould; she played the ladies of high comedy with grace, distinction, and delicacy. But in Sir Harry Wildair she parted with a woman's mincing foot and tongue, and played the man in a style large, spirited, and *élancé*. As Mrs. Day (committee), she painted wrinkles on her lovely face so honestly that she was taken for threescore, and she carried out the design with voice and person, and did a vulgar old woman to the life. She disfigured her own beauties to show the beauty of her art: in a word, she was an artist! It does not follow she was the greatest artist that ever breathed; far from it. Mr. Vane was carried to this notion by passion and ignorance.

On the evening of our tale he was at his post, patiently sitting out one of those sanguinary discourses our rude forefathers thought were tragic plays. *Sedet æternumque sedebit infelix Theseus,* because Mrs. Woffington is to speak the epilogue.

These epilogues were curiosities of the human mind; they whom, just to ourselves and *them,* we call our *forbears*, had an idea their blood and bombast were not ridiculous enough in themselves, so when the curtain had fallen on the *débris* of the *dramatis personæ,* and of common sense, they sent on an actress to turn all the sentiment so laboriously acquired into a jest.

To insist that nothing good or beautiful shall be carried safe from a play out into the street was the bigotry of English horse-play. Was a Lucretia the heroine of the tragedy, she was careful in the epilogue to speak like Messalina. Did a king's mistress come to hunger and repentance, she disinfected all the *petites maîtresses* in the house of the moral, by assuring them

that sin is a joke, repentance a greater, and that she individually was ready for either if they would but cry, laugh and pay. Then the audience used to laugh, and if they did not, lo! the manager, actor, and author of heroic tragedy, were exceeding sorrowful.

Whilst sitting attendance on the epilogue, Mr. Vane had nothing to distract him from the congregation but a sanguinary sermon in five heads, so his eyes roved over the pews, and presently he became aware of a familiar face watching him closely. The gentleman to whom it belonged finding himself recognized left his seat, and a minute later Sir Charles Pomander entered Mr. Vane's box.

This Sir Charles Pomander was a gentleman of vice,—pleasure, he called it. Mr. Vane had made his acquaintance two years ago in Shropshire. Sir Charles, who husbanded everything except his soul, had turned himself out to grass for a month. His object was, by roast mutton, bread with some little flour in it, air, water, temperance, chastity, and peace, to be enabled to take a deeper plunge into impurities of food and morals.

A few nights ago, unseen by Mr. Vane, he had observed him in the theatre; an ordinary man would have gone at once and shaken hands with him; but this was not an ordinary man, this was a diplomatist. First of all, he said to himself, "What is this man doing here?" Then he soon discovered this man must be in love with some actress. Then it became his business to know who she was; this, too, soon betrayed itself. Then it became more than ever Sir Charles's business to know whether Mrs. Woffington returned the sentiment, and here his penetration was at fault for the moment; he determined, however, to discover.

Mr. Vane, then, received his friend all unsuspicious how that friend had been skinning him with his eye for some time past. After the usual compliments had passed

between two gentlemen who had been hand and glove for a month and forgotten each other's existence for two years, Sir Charles, still keeping in view his design, said:

"Let us go upon the stage." The fourth act had just concluded.

"Go upon the stage!" said Mr. Vane; "what, where she —I mean among the actors?"

"Yes; come into the green-room. There are one or two people of reputation there; I will introduce you to them, if you please."

"Go upon the stage!" why, if it had been proposed to him to go to heaven he would not have been more astonished. He was too astonished at first to realise the full beauty of the arrangement, by means of which he might be within a yard of Mrs. Woffington, might feel her dress rustle past him, might speak to her, might drink her voice fresh from her lips, almost before it mingled with meaner air. Silence gives consent, and Mr. Vane, though he thought a great deal, said nothing; so Pomander rose, and they left the boxes together. He led the way to the stage door, which was opened obsequiously to him; they then passed through a dismal passage, and suddenly emerged upon that scene of enchantment, the stage,—a dirty platform encumbered on all sides with piles of scenery in flats. They threaded their way through rusty-velvet actors and fustian carpenters, and entered the green-room. At the door of this magic chamber Vane trembled and half wished he could retire. They entered; his apprehension gave way to disappointment, she was not there. Collecting himself he was presently introduced to a smart, jaunty, and to do him justice, *distingué* old beau. This was Colley Cibber, Esq., poet laureate, and retired actor and dramatist, a gentleman who is entitled to a word or two.

This Cibber was the only actor since Shakespeare's time who had both acted and written well. Pope's per-

sonal resentment misleads the reader of English poetry as to Cibber's real place among the wits of the day.

The man's talent was dramatic, not didactic, or epic, or pastoral. Pope was not so deep in the drama as in other matters, and Cibber was one of its luminaries; he wrote some of the best comedies of his day. He also succeeded where Dryden, for lack of true dramatic taste, failed; he tampered successfully with Shakespeare. Colley Cibber's version of "Richard the Third" is impudent and slightly larcenic, but it is marvellously effective. It has stood a century, and probably will stand for ever; and the most admired passages in what literary humbugs who pretend they know Shakespeare by the closet, not the stage, accept as Shakespeare's "Richard," are Cibber's.

Mr. Cibber was now in private life, a mild edition of his own Lord Foppington; he had none of the snob-fop as represented on our conventional stage; nobody ever had, and lived. He was in tolerably good taste; but he went ever gold-laced, highly powdered, scented, and diamonded, dispensing graceful bows, praises of whoever had the good luck to be dead, and satire of all who were here to enjoy it.

Mr. Vane, to whom the drama had now become the golden branch of letters, looked with some awe on this veteran, for he had seen many Woffingtons. He fell soon upon the subject nearest his heart. He asked Mr. Cibber what he thought of Mrs. Woffington. The old gentleman thought well of the young lady's talent, especially her comedy. "In tragedy," said he "she imitates Mademoiselle Dumesnil, of the Théâtre Français, and confounds the stage rhetorician with the actress." The next question was not so fortunate. "Did you ever see so great and true an actress upon the whole?"

Mr. Cibber opened his eyes, a slight flush came into his wash-leather face, and he replied, "I have not only

seen many equal, many superior to her, but I have seen some half-dozen who would have eaten her up and spit her out again, and not known they had done anything out of the way."

Here Pomander soothed the veteran's dudgeon by explaining in dulcet tones that his friend was not long from Shropshire, and— The critic interrupted him, and bade him not dilute the excuse.

Now, Mr. Vane had as much to say as either of them; but he had not the habit, which dramatic folks have, of carrying his whole bank in his cheek-pocket, so they quenched him for two minutes. But lovers are not silenced; he soon returned to the attack. He dwelt on the grace, the ease, the freshness, the intelligence, the universal beauty of Mrs. Woffington. Pomander sneered, to draw him out. Cibber smiled, with good-natured superiority. This nettled the young gentleman; he fired up, his handsome countenance glowed, he turned Demosthenes for her he loved. One advantage he had over both Cibber and Pomander,—a fair stock of classical learning; on this he now drew.

"Other actors and actresses," said he, "are monotonous in voice, monotonous in action, but Mrs. Woffington's delivery has the compass and variety of nature, and her movements are free from the stale uniformity that distinguishes artifice from art. The others seem to me to have but two dreams of grace; a sort of crawling on stilts is their motion, and an angular stiffness their repose." He then cited the most famous statues of antiquity, and quoted situations in plays where, by her fine dramatic instinct, Mrs. Woffington, he said, threw her person into postures similar to these, and of equal beauty. "Not that she strikes attitudes, like the rest, but she melts from one beautiful statue into another; and if sculptors could gather from her immortal graces, painters too might take from her face the beauties that belong

of right to passion and thought, and orators might revive their withered art, and learn from those golden lips the music of old Athens, that quelled tempestuous mobs and princes drunk with victory."

Much as this was, he was going to say more, ever so much more, but he became conscious of a singular sort of grin upon every face; this grin made him turn rapidly round to look for its cause. It explained itself at once; at his very elbow was a lady, whom his heart recognized, though her back was turned to him. She was dressed in a rich silk gown, pearl white, with flowers and sprigs embroidered; her beautiful white neck and arms were bare. She was sweeping up the room with the epilogue in her hand, learning it off by heart; at the other end of the room she turned, and now she shone full upon him.

It certainly was a dazzling creature. She had a head of beautiful form, perched like a bird upon a throat massive yet shapely and smooth as a column of alabaster, a symmetrical brow, black eyes full of fire and tenderness, a delicious mouth, with a hundred varying expressions, and that marvellous faculty of giving beauty alike to love or scorn, a sneer or a smile. But she had one feature more remarkable than all,—her eyebrows, the actor's feature. They were jet black, strongly marked, and in repose were arched like a rainbow; but it was their extraordinary flexibility which made other faces upon the stage look sleepy beside Margaret Woffington's. In person she was considerably above the middle height, and so finely formed that one could not determine the exact character of her figure. At one time it seemed all stateliness, at another time elegance personified, and flowing voluptuousness at another. She was Juno, Psyche, Hebe, by turns, and for aught we know, at will.

It must be confessed that a sort of halo of personal

grandeur surrounds a great actress. A scene is set; half a dozen nobodies are there lost in it, because they are and seem lumps of nothing. The great artist steps upon that scene, and how she fills it in a moment! Mind and majesty wait upon her in the air; her person is lost in the greatness of her personal presence; she dilates with *thought,* and a stupid giantess looks a dwarf beside her.

No wonder, then, that Mr. Vane felt overpowered by this torch in a closet. To vary the metaphor, it seemed to him, as she swept up and down, as if the green-room was a shell, and this glorious creature must burst it and be free. Meantime the others saw a pretty actress studying her business; and Cibber saw a dramatic school-girl learning what he presumed to be a very silly set of words. Sir C. Pomander's eye had been on her the moment she entered, and he watched keenly the effect of Vane's eloquent eulogy; but apparently the actress was too deep in her epilogue for anything else. She came in, saying "Mum, mum, mum," over her task, and she went on doing so. The experienced Mr. Cibber, who had divined Vane in an instant, drew him into a corner, and complimented him on his well-timed eulogy.

"You acted that mighty well, Sir," said he. "Stop my vitals! if I did not think you were in earnest, till I saw the jade had slipped in among us. It told, Sir—it told."

Up fired Vane. "What do you mean, Sir?" said he. "Do you suppose my admiration of that lady is feigned?"

"No need to speak so loud, Sir," replied the old gentleman; "she hears you. These hussies have ears like hawks."

He then dispensed a private wink and a public bow; with which he strolled away from Mr. Vane, and walked feebly and jauntily up the room, whistling "Fair Hebe;" fixing his eye upon the past, and somewhat osten-

tatiously overlooking the existence of the present company.

There is no great harm in an old gentleman whistling, but there are two ways of doing it; and as this old beau did it, it seemed not unlike a small cock-a-doodle-doo of general defiance; and the denizens of the green-room, swelled now to a considerable number by the addition of all the ladies and gentlemen who had been killed in the fourth act, or whom the buttery-fingered author could not keep in hand until the fall of the curtain, felt it as such; and so they were not sorry when Mrs. Woffington, looking up from her epilogue, cast a glance upon the old beau, waited for him, and walked parallel with him on the other side the room, giving an absurdly exact imitation of his carriage and deportment. To make this more striking, she pulled out of her pocket, after a mock search, a huge paste ring, gazed on it with a ludicrous affectation of simple wonder, stuck it, like Cibber's diamond, on her little finger, and pursing up her mouth, proceeded to whistle a quick movement,

"Which, by some devilish cantrip sleight,"

played round the old beau's slow movement, without being at variance with it. As for the character of this lady-like performance, it was clear, brilliant, and loud as that of a blacksmith.

The folk laughed; Vane was shocked. "She profanes herself by whistling," thought he. Mr. Cibber was confounded. He appeared to have no idea whence came this sparkling adagio. He looked round, placed his hands to his ears, and left off whistling. So did his musical accomplice.

"Gentlemen," said Cibber, with pathetic gravity, "the wind howls most dismally this evening! I took it for a drunken shoemaker!"

At this there was a roar of laughter, except from Mr. Vane. Peg Woffington laughed as merrily as the others, and showed a set of teeth that were really dazzling, but all in one moment, without the preliminaries an ordinary countenance requires, this laughing Venus pulled a face gloomy beyond conception. Down came her black brows straight as a line, and she cast a look of bitter reproach on all present,—resuming her study as who should say, "Are ye not ashamed to divert a poor girl from her epilogue?" And then she went on, "Mum! mum! mum!" casting off ever and anon resentful glances; and this made the fools l ugh again.

The Laureate was now respectfully addressed by one of his admirers, James Quin, the Falstaff of the day, and the rival at this time of Garrick in tragic characters, though the general opinion was that he could not long maintain a stand against the younger genius and his rising school of art.

Off the stage James Quin was a character; his eccentricities were three,—a humorist, a glutton, and an honest man; traits that often caused astonishment and ridicule, especially the last.

"May we not hope for something from Mr. Cibber's pen after so long a silence?"

"No," was the considerate reply. "Who have ye got to play it?"

"Plenty," said Quin; "there's your humble servant, there's—"

"Humility at the head of the list," cried she of the epilogue. "Mum! mum! mum!"

Vane thought this so sharp.

"Garrick, Barry, Macklin, Kitty Clive here at my side, Mrs. Cibber, the best tragic actress I ever saw, and Woffington, who is as good a comedian as you ever saw, Sir," and Quin turned as red as fire.

"Keep your temper, Jemmy," said Mrs. Woffington, with a severe accent. "Mum! mum! mum!"

"You misunderstand my question," replied Cibber, calmly; "I know your *dramatis personæ*, but where the devil are your actors?"

Here was a blow.

"The public," said Quin, in some agitation, "would snore, if we acted as they did in your time."

"How do you know that, Sir?" was the supercilious rejoinder; *"you never tried!"*

Mr. Quin was silenced. Peg Woffington looked off her epilogue.

"Bad as we are," said she, coolly, "we might be worse."

Mr. Cibber turned round, slightly raised his eyebrows;—

"Indeed!" said he. "Madam!" added he, with a courteous smile, "will you be kind enough to explain to me how you could be worse?"

"If, like a crab, we could go backwards!"

At this the auditors tittered, and Mr. Cibber had recourse to his spy-glass.

This gentleman was satirical or insolent, as the case might demand, in three degrees, of which the snuff-box was the comparative, and the spy-glass the superlative. He had learned this on the stage; in annihilating Quin he had just used the snuff weapon, and now he drew his spy-glass upon poor Peggy.

"Whom have we here?" said he. Then he looked with his spy-glass to see. "Oh, the little Irish orange girl!"

"Whose basket outweighed Colley Cibber's salary for the first twenty years of his dramatic career," was the delicate reply to the above delicate remark. It staggered him for a moment; however, he affected a most puzzled air, then gradually allowed a light to steal into his features.

"Eh! ah! oh! how stupid I am; I understand; you sold something besides oranges!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Vane, and coloured up to the temples, and cast a look on Cibber, as much as to say, "if you were not seventy-three!"

His ejaculation was something so different from any tone any other person there present could have uttered, that the actress's eye dwelt on him for a single moment, and in that moment he felt himself looked through and through.

"I sold the young fops a bargain, you mean," was her calm reply; "and now I am come down to the old ones. A truce, Mr. Cibber; what do you understand by an actor? Tell me; for I am foolish enough to respect your opinion on these matters."

"An actor, young lady," said he, gravely, "is an artist who has gone deep enough in his art to make dunces, critics, and greenhorns take it for nature; moreover, he really personates; which your mere *man of the stage* never does. He has learned the true art of self-multiplication. He drops Betterton, Booth, Wilkes, or, a-hem—"

"Cibber" inserted Sir Charles Pomander. Cibber bowed.

"In his dressing-room, and comes out young or old, a fop, a valet, a lover, or a hero, with voice, mien, and every gesture to match. A grain less than this may be good speaking, fine preaching, deep grunting, high ranting, eloquent reciting; but I'll be hanged if it is acting."

"Then Colley Cibber never acted," whispered Quin to Mrs. Clive.

"Then Margaret Woffington is an actress," said M. W. "The fine ladies take my Lady Betty for their sister; in Mrs. Day I pass for a woman of seventy; and in Sir Harry Wildair I have been taken for a man. I would have told you that before, but I didn't know it was to my

credit," said she slily, "till Mr. Cibber laid down the law."

"Proof!" said Cibber.

"A warm letter from one lady, diamond buckles from another, and an offer of her hand and fortune from a third; *rien que cela.*"

Mr. Cibber conveyed behind her back a look of absolute incredulity; she divined it.

"I will not show you the letters," continued she,—"because Sir Harry, though a rake, was a gentleman,—but here are the buckles;" and she fished them out of her pocket, capacious of such things. The buckles were gravely inspected; they made more than one eye water, —they were undeniable.

"Well, let us see what we can do for her," said the Laureate. He tapped his box, and without a moment's hesitation produced the most execrable distich in the language:—

"Now who is like Peggy, with talent at will?
A maid loved her Harry, *for want of a Bill!*"

"Well, child," continued he, after the applause which follows extemporary verses had subsided, "take *me* in. Play something to make me lose sight of saucy Peg Woffington, and I'll give the world for five acts more before the curtain falls on Colley Cibber."

"If you could be deceived," put in Mr. Vane, somewhat timidly, "I think there is no disguise through which grace and beauty such as Mrs. Woffington's would not shine, to my eyes."

"That is to praise my person at the expense of my wit, Sir, is it not?" was her reply.

This was the first word she had ever addressed to him; the tones appeared so sweet to him that he could not find anything to reply for listening to them; and Cibber resumed:—

"Meantime, I will show you a real actress; she is coming here to-night to meet me. Did ever you children hear of Ann Bracegirdle?"

"Bracegirdle!" said Mrs. Clive; "why she has been dead this thirty years; at least, I thought so."

"Dead to the stage. There is more heat in her ashes than in your fire, Kate Clive! Ah! here comes her messenger," continued he, as an ancient man appeared with a letter in his hand. This letter Mrs. Woffington snatched and read, and at the same instant in bounced the call-boy. "Epilogue called!" said this urchin, in the tone of command which these small fry of Parnassus adopt; and obedient to his high behest, Mrs. Woffington moved to the door with the Bracegirdle missive in her hand,—but not before she had delivered its general contents. "The great actress will be here in a few minutes," said she, and she glided swiftly out of the room.

CHAPTER II

PEOPLE whose mind or manners possess any feature, and are not as devoid of all eccentricity as half-pounds of butter bought of metropolitan grocers, are recommended not to leave a roomful of their acquaintances until the last but one. Yes, they should always be penultimate. Perhaps Mrs. Woffington knew this; but epilogues are stubborn things, and call-boys undeniable.

"Did you ever hear a woman whistle before?"

"Never; but I saw one sit astride on an ass in Germany!"

"The saddle was not on her husband, I hope, Madame?"

"No, Sir; the husband walked by his kinsfolk's side and made the best of a bad bargain, as Peggy's husband will have to."

"Wait till some one ventures on the gay Lotharia—*illi æs triplex;* that means he must have triple brass, Kitty."

"I deny that, Sir; since his wife will always have enough for both."

"I have not observed the lady's brass," said Vane, trembling with passion; "but I observed her talent, and I noticed that whoever attacks her to her face comes badly off."

"Well said, Sir," answered Quin; "and I wish Kitty here would tell us why she hates Mrs. Woffington, the best-natured woman in the theatre?"

"I don't hate her, I don't trouble my head about her."

"Yes, you hate her; for you never miss a cut at her, never!"

"Do you hate a haunch of venison, Quin?" said the lady.

"No! you little unnatural monster," replied Quin.

"For all that you never miss a cut at one, so hold your tongue!"

"Le beau raisonnement!" said Mr. Cibber. "James Quin, don't interfere with nature's laws. Let our ladies hate one another, it eases their minds; try to make them Christians and you will not convert their tempers, but spoil your own. Peggy there hates George Anne Bellamy, because she has gaudy silk dresses from Paris,—by paying for them, as *she* could, if not too stingy. Kitty here hates Peggy because Rich has breeched her, whereas Kitty, who now sets up for a prude, wanted to put delicacy off and small clothes on in Peg's stead. That is where the Kate-and-Peg shoe pinches, near the femoral artery, James."

"Shrimps have the souls of shrimps," resumed this *censor castigatorque minorum*. "Listen to me, and learn that really great actors are great in soul, and do not blubber like a great school-girl because Anne Bellamy has two yellow silk dresses from Paris, as I saw Woffington blubber in this room, and would not be comforted; nor fume, like Kitty Clive, because Woffington has a pair of breeches and a little boy's rapier to go a-playing at acting with. When I was young two giantesses fought for empire upon this very stage, where now dwarfs crack and bounce like parched peas. They played Roxana and Statira in the 'Rival Queens.' Rival queens of art themselves, they put out all their strength. In the middle of the last act the town gave judgment in favour of Statira. What did Roxana? Did she spill grease on Statira's robe, as Peg Woffington would? or stab her, as I believe Kitty here capable of doing? No! Statira was never so tenderly killed as that night; she owned this to me. Roxana bade the theatre farewell that night,

and wrote to Statira thus—I give you word for word: 'Madame, the best judge we have has decided in your favour. I shall never play second on a stage where I have been first so long, but I shall often be a spectator, and methinks none will appreciate your talent more than I, who have felt its weight. My wardrobe, one of the best in Europe, is of no use to me; if you will honour me by selecting a few of my dresses you will gratify me, and I shall fancy I see myself upon the stage to greater advantage than before.'"

"And what did Statira answer, Sir?" said Mr. Vane, eagerly.

"She answered thus: 'Madame, the town has often been wrong, and may have been so last night, in supposing that I vied successfully with your merit; but thus much is certain—and here, Madam, I am the best judge—that off the stage you have just conquered me. I shall wear with pride any dress you have honoured, and shall feel inspired to great exertions by your presence among our spectators, unless, indeed, the sense of your magnanimity and the recollection of your talent should damp me by the dread of losing any portion of your good opinion.'"

"What a couple of stiff old things!" said Mrs. Clive.

"Nay, Madam, say not so," cried Vane, warmly; "surely this was the lofty courtesy of two great minds, not to be overbalanced by strife, defeat, or victory."

"'What were their names, Sir?"

"Statira was the great Mrs. Oldfield. Roxana you will see here to-night."

This caused a sensation.

Colley's reminiscences were interrupted by loud applause from the theatre; the present seldom gives the past a long hearing.

The old war-horse cocked his ears.

"It is Woffington speaking the epilogue," said Quin.

"Oh! she has got the length of their foot, somehow," said a small actress.

"And the breadth of their hands, too," said Pomander, waking from a nap.

"It is the depth of their hearts she has sounded," said Vane.

In those days, if a metaphor started up, the poor thing was coursed up hill and down dale, and torn limb from jacket; even in Parliament, a trope was sometime hunted from one session into another.

"You were asking me about Mrs. Oldfield, Sir," resumed Cibber, rather peevishly. "I will own to you I lack words to convey a just idea of her double and complete supremacy. But the comedians of this day are weak-strained *farceurs* compared with her, and her tragic tone was thunder set to music.

"I saw a brigadier-general cry like a child at her Indiana; I have seen her crying with pain herself at the wing (for she was always a great sufferer), I have seen her then spring upon the stage as Lady Townley, and in a moment sorrow brightened into joy; the air seemed to fill with singing-birds, that chirped the pleasures of fashion, love, and youth, in notes sparkling like diamonds, and stars, and prisms. She was above criticism, out of its scope, as is the blue sky; men went not to judge her, —they drank her, and gazed at her, and were warmed at her, and refreshed by her. The fops were awed into silence, and with their humbler betters thanked Heaven for her, if they thanked it for anything.

"In all the crowded theatre, care and pain and poverty were banished from the memory whilst Oldfield's face spoke and her tongue flashed melodies. The lawyer forgot his quillets; the polemic, the mote in his brother's eye; the old maid, her grudge against the two sexes; the old man, his grey hairs and his lost hours. And can it be that all this, which should have been immortal, is quite—

quite lost, is as though it had never been?" he sighed. "Can it be that its frame is now sustained by me, who twang with my poor lute, cracked and old, these feeble praises of a broken lyre,—

'Whose wires were golden, and its heavenly air
More tunable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear?' "

He paused, and his eye looked back over many years; then, with a very different tone, he added:—

"And that Jack Falstaff there must have seen her, now I think on't."

"Only once, Sir," said Quin, "and I was but ten years old."

"He saw her once, and he was ten years old; yet he calls Woffington a great comedian, and my son The's wife, with her hatchet face, the greatest tragedian he ever saw! Jemmy, what an ass you must be!"

"Mrs. Cibber always makes me cry, and t' other always makes me laugh," said Quin, stoutly, "that's why."

Ce beau raisonnement met no answer but a look of sovereign contempt.

A very trifling incident saved the ladies of the British stage from further criticism. There were two candles in this room, one on each side; the call-boy had entered, and poking about for something, knocked down and broke one of these.

"Awkward imp!" cried a velvet page.

"I'll go *to the Treasury* for another, Ma'am," said the boy, pertly, and vanished with the fractured wax.

I take advantage of the interruption to open Mr. Vane's mind to the reader. First, he had been astonished at the freedom of sarcasm these people indulged in without quarrelling; next at the non-respect of sex.

"So sex is not recognised in this community," thought he. Then the glibness and merit of some of their answers surprised and amused him. He, like me, had seldom met an imaginative repartee, except in a play or a book. "Society's" repartees were then, as they are now, the good old tree in various dresses and veils: *Tu quoque; Tu mentiris; Vos damnemini;* but he was sick and dispirited on the whole,—such very bright illusions had been dimmed in these few minutes.

She was brilliant; but her manners, if not masculine, were very daring; and yet, when she spoke to him, a stranger, how sweet and gentle her voice was! Then it was clear, nothing but his ignorance could have placed her at the summit of her art.

Still he clung to his enthusiasm for her. He drew Pomander aside. "What a simplicity there is in Mrs. Woffington!" said he; "the rest, male and female, are all so affected; she is so fresh and natural. They are all hot-house plants; she is a cowslip with the May dew on it."

"What you take for simplicity is her refined art," replied Sir Charles.

"No!'" said Vane, "I never saw a more innocent creature!"

Pomander laughed in his face. This laugh disconcerted him more than words; he spoke no more,—he sat pensive. He was sorry he had come to this place, where everybody knew his goddess, yet nobody admired, nobody loved and alas! nobody respected her.

He was roused from his reverie by a noise; the noise was caused by Cibber falling on Garrick, whom Pomander had maliciously quoted against all the tragedians of Colley Cibber's day.

"I tell you," cried the veteran, "that this Garrick has banished dignity from the stage, and given us in ex-

change what you and he take for fire, but it is smoke and vapour. His manner is little, like his person,—it is all fuss and bustle. This is his idea of a tragic scene: A little fellow comes bustling in, goes bustling about, and runs bustling out." Here Mr. Cibber left the room, to give greater effect to his description, but presently returned in a mighty pother, saying: "'Give me another horse!' Well, where's the horse? don't you see I'm waiting for him? 'Bind up my wounds!' Look sharp now with these wounds. 'Have mercy, Heaven!' but be quick about it, for the pit can't wait for Heaven. Bustle! bustle! bustle!"

The old dog was so irresistibly funny that the whole company were obliged to laugh; but in the midst of their merriment Mrs. Woffington's voice was heard at the door.

"This way, Madame."

A clear and somewhat shrill voice replied, "I know the way better than you, child;" and a stately old lady appeared on the threshold.

"Bracegirdle," said Mr. Cibber.

It may well be supposed that every eye was turned on this new-comer,—that Roxana for whom Cibber's story had prepared a peculiar interest. She was dressed in a rich, green-velvet gown with gold fringe. Cibber remembered it; she had played the "Eastern Queen" in it. Heaven forgive all concerned! It was fearfully pinched in at the waist and ribs, so as to give the idea of wood inside, not woman.

Her hair and eyebrows were iron-grey; and she had lost a front tooth, or she would still have been eminently handsome. She was tall and straight as a dart, and her noble port betrayed none of the weakness of age; only it was to be seen that her hands were a little weak, and the gold-headed crutch struck the ground rather sharply, as if it did a little limb's duty.

Such was the lady who marched into the middle of the room, with a "How do, Colley?" and looking over the company's heads as if she did not see them, regarded the four walls with some interest. Like a cat, she seemed to think more of places than of folk.. The page obsequiously offered her a chair.

"Not so clean as it used to be," said Mrs. Bracegirdle.

Unfortunately, in making this remark, the old lady graciously patted the page's head for offering her the chair; and this action gave, with some of the ill-constituted minds that are ever on the titter, a ridiculous direction to a remark intended, I believe, for the paint and wainscots, etc.

"Nothing is as it used to be," remarked Mr. Cibber.

"All the better for everything," said Mrs. Clive.

"We were laughing at this mighty little David, first actor of this mighty little age."

Now if Mr. Cibber thought to find in the new comer an ally of the past in its indiscriminate attack upon the present, he was much mistaken; for the old actress made onslaught on this nonsense at once.

"Ay, ay," said she, "and not the first time by many hundreds. 'Tis a disease you have. Cure yourself, Colley. Davy Garrick pleases the public; and in trifles like acting, that take nobody to heaven, to please all the world is to be great. Some pretend to higher aims, but none have 'em. You may hide this from young fools, mayhap, but not from an old 'oman like me. He! he! he! No, no, no,—not from an old 'oman like me."

She then turned round in her chair, and with that sudden, unaccountable snappishness of tone to which the brisk old are subject, she snarled, "Gie me a pinch of snuff, some of ye, do!"

Tobacco-dust was instantly at her disposal. She took it with the points of her fingers, delicately, and divested

the crime of half its uncleanness and vulgarity,—more an angel couldn't.

"Monstrous sensible woman, though!" whispered Quin to Clive.

"Hey, Sir! what do you say, Sir? for I'm a little deaf." (Not very to praise, it seems.)

"That your judgment, Madam, is equal to the reputation of your talent."

The words were hardly spoken before the old lady rose upright as a tower. She then made an oblique preliminary sweep, and came down with such a curtsey as the young had never seen.

James Quin, not to disgrace his generation, attempted a corresponding bow, for which his figure and apoplectic tendency rendered him unfit; and whilst he was transacting it, the graceful Cibber stepped gravely up, and looked down and up the process with his glass, like a naturalist inspecting some strange capriccio of an ourang-outang. The gymnastics of courtesy ended, without back-falls, Cibber lowered his tone:—

"You are right, Bracy. It is nonsense denying the young fellow's talent; but his Othello, now Bracy! be just,—his Othello!"

"Oh dear! oh dear!" cried she; "I thought it was Desdemona's little black boy come in without the tea-kettle."

Quin laughed uproariously.

"It made me laugh a deal more than Mr. Quin's Falstaff. Oh dear! oh dear!"

"Falstaff, indeed! Snuff!" in the tone of a trumpet.

Quin secretly revoked his good opinion of this woman's sense.

"Madam," said the page, timidly, "if you would but favour us with a specimen of the old style!"

"Well, child, why not? Only, what makes you mumble like that? But they all do it now, I see. Bless my

soul! our words used to come out like brandy-cherries; but now a sentence is like raspberry-jam, on the stage and off."

Cibber chuckled.

"And why don't you men carry yourself like Cibber here?"

"Don't press that question," said Colley, dryly.

"A monstrous poor actor, though," said the merciless old woman, in a mock aside to the others; "only twenty shillings a week for half his life; and her shoulders went up to her ears. Then she fell into a half reverie. "Yes, we were distinct," said she; "but I must own, children, we were slow. Once, in the midst of a beautiful tirade, my lover went to sleep, and fell against me. A mighty pretty epigram, twenty lines, was writ on't by one of my gallants. Have ye as many of them as we used?"

"In that respect," said the page, "we are not behind our great-grandmothers."

"I call that pert," said Mrs. Bracegirdle, with the air of drawing scientific distinctions. "Now, is that a boy or a lady that spoke to me last?"

"By its dress, I should say a boy," said Cibber, with his glass; "by its assurance, a lady!"

"There's one clever woman amongst ye,—Peg something; plays Lothario, Lady Betty Modish, and what not."

"What! admire Woffington?" screamed Mrs. Clive; "why, she is the greatest gabbler on the stage."

"I don't care," was the reply, "there's nature about the jade. Don't contradict me," added she, with sudden fury; "a parcel of children!"

"No, Madam," said Clive, humbly. "Mr. Cibber, will you try and prevail on Mrs. Bracegirdle to favour us with a recitation?"

Cibber handed his cane with pomp to a small actor. Bracegirdle did the same; and striking the attitudes that

had passed for heroic in their day, they declaimed out of the "Rival Queens" two or three tirades, which I graciously spare the reader of this tale. Their elocution was neat and silvery; but not one bit like the way people speak in streets, palaces, fields, roads, and rooms. They had not made the grand discovery, which Mr. A. Wigan on the stage, and every man of sense off it, has made in our day and nation,—namely, that the stage is a representation not of state, but of life; and that an actor ought to speak and act in imitation of human beings, not of speaking-machines that have run and creaked in a stage groove, with their eyes shut upon the world at large, upon nature, upon truth, upon man, upon woman, and upon child.

"This is slow," cried Cibber; "let us show these young people how ladies and gentlemen moved fifty years ago, —*dansons!*"

A fiddler was caught, a beautiful slow minuet played, and a bit of "solemn dancing" done. Certainly, it was not gay, but it must be owned it was beautiful, it was the dance of kings, the poetry of the courtly saloon.

The retired actress, however, had frisker notions left in her. "This is slow," cried she, and bade the fiddler play "The wind that shakes the barley,"—an ancient jig tune; this she danced to in a style that utterly astounded the spectators.

She showed them what fun was; her feet and her stick were all echoes to the mad strain; out went her heel behind, and returning, drove her four yards forward. She made unaccountable slants, and cut them all over in turn if they did not jump for it. Roars of inextinguishable laughter arose; it would have made an oyster merry. Suddenly she stopped, and put her hands to her sides, and soon after she gave a vehement cry of pain.

The laughter ceased.

She gave another cry of such agony that they were all round her in a moment.

"Oh! help me, ladies," screamed the poor woman, in tones as feminine as they were heartrending and piteous. "Oh, my back! my loins! I suffer, gentlemen," said the poor thing, faintly.

What was to be done! Mr. Vane offered his penknife to cut her laces.

"You shall cut my head off sooner," cried she, with sudden energy. "Don't pity me," said she, sadly, "I don't deserve it;" then lifting her eyes, she exclaimed, with a sad air of self-reproach: "Oh, vanity! do you never leave a woman?"

"Nay, Madam!" whimpered the page, who was a good-hearted girl; "'twas your great complaisance for us, not vanity. Oh! oh! oh!" and she began to blubber to make matters better.

"No, my children," said the old lady, "'t was vanity. I wanted to show you what an old 'oman could do; and I have humiliated myself, trying to outshine younger folk. I am justly humiliated, as you see," and she began to cry a little.

"This is very painful," said Cibber.

Mrs. Bracegirdle now raised her eyes (they had set her in a chair), and looking sweetly, tenderly, and earnestly on her old companion, she said to him, slowly, gently, but impressively:—

"Colley, at three-score years and ten, this was ill-done of us! You and I are here now for what? to cheer the young up the hill we mounted years ago. And, old friend, if we detract from them we discourage them,—a great sin in the old!"

"Every dog his day."

"We have had ours." Here she smiled, then laying her hand tenderly in the old man's, she added, with calm solemnity: "And now we must go quietly towards our

rest, and strut and fret no more the few last minutes of life's fleeting hour."

How tame my cacotype of these words compared with what they were. I am ashamed of them and myself, and the human craft of writing, which, though commoner far, is so miserably behind the godlike art of speech. *Si ipsam audivisses!*

These ink scratches, which in the imperfection of language we have called words, till the unthinking actually dream they are words, but which are the shadows of the corpses of words,—these word-shadows then were living powers on her lips, and subdued, as eloquence always does, every heart within reach of the imperial tongue.

The young loved her, and the old man, softened and vanquished, and mindful of his failing life, was silent, and pressed his handkerchief to his eyes a moment; then he said:—

"No, Bracy—no. Be composed, I pray you. She is right. Young people, forgive me that I love the dead too well, and the days when I was what you are now. Drat the woman!" continued he, half-ashamed of his emotion; "she makes us laugh and makes us cry, just as she used."

"What does he say, young woman?" said the old lady, dryly, to Mrs. Clive.

"He says you make us laugh, and make us cry, Madam; and so you do me, I'm sure."

"And that's Peg Woffington's notion of an actress! Better it, Cibber and Bracegirdle, if you can," said the other, rising up like lightning.

She then threw Colley Cibber a note, and walked coolly and rapidly out of the room, without looking once behind her.

The rest stood transfixed, looking at one another, and at the empty chair. Then Cibber opened and read the

note aloud. It was from Mrs. Bracegirdle: "Playing at tric-trac; so can't play the fool in your green-room to-night.—B."

On this, a musical ringing laugh was heard from outside the door, where the pseudo Bracegirdle was washing the grey from her hair, and the wrinkles from her face,—ah! I wish I could do it as easily!—and the little bit of sticking-plaster from her front tooth.

"Why, it is the Irish jade!" roared Cibber.

"Divil a less!" rang back a rich brogue; "and it 's not the furst time we put the comether upon ye, England, my jewal!"

One more mutual glance, and then the mortal cleverness of all this began to dawn on their minds; and they broke forth into clapping of hands, and gave his accomplished *mime* three rounds of applause,—Mr. Vane and Sir Charles Pomander leading with "Brava, Woffington!"

Its effect on Mr. Vane may be imagined. Who but she could have done this? This was as if a painter should so paint a man as to deceive his species. This was acting, but not like the acting of the stage. He was in transports, and self-satisfaction at his own judgment mingled pleasantly with his admiration.

In this cheerful exhibition, one joined not,—Mr. Cibber. His theories had received a shock, and we all love our theories. He himself had received a rap, and we don't hate ourselves.

Great is the syllogism! But there is a class of arguments less vulnerable.

If A says to B, "You can't hit me, as I prove by this syllogism" (here followeth the syllogism), and B, *pour toute réponse,* knocks A down such a whack that he rebounds into a sitting posture; and to him the man, the tree, the lamp-post, and the fire-escape, become not clearly distinguishable,—this barbarous logic prevails

against the logic in Barbara, and the syllogism is in the predicament of Humpty Dumpty.

In this predicament was the Poet Laureate. "The miscreant Proteus (could not) escape these claims!" So the miscreant Proteus—no bad name for an old actor—took his little cocked hat and marched, a smaller, if not a wiser man. Some disjointed words fell from him,—"Mimicry is not acting," &c.,—and with one bitter, mowing glance at the applauders, *circumferens acriter oculos,* he vanished in the largest pinch of snuff on record. The rest dispersed more slowly.

Mr. Vane waited eagerly, and watched the door for Mrs. Woffington; but she did not come. He then made acquaintance with good-natured Mr. Quin, who took him upon the stage, and showed him by what vulgar appliances that majestic rise of the curtain he so admired was effected. Returning to the green-room for his friend, he found him in animated conversation with Mrs. Woffington. This made Vane uneasy.

Sir Charles, up to the present moment of the evening, had been unwontedly silent, and now he was talking nineteen to the dozen, and Mrs. Woffington was listening with an appearance of interest that sent a pang to poor Vane's heart; he begged Mr. Quin to introduce him.

Mr. Quin introduced him.

The lady received his advances with polite composure. Mr. Vane stammered his admiration of her Bracegirdle; but all he could find words to say was mere general praise, and somewhat coldly received. Sir Charles, on the contrary, spoke more like a critic. "Had you given us the stage cackle, or any of those traditionary symptoms of old age, we should have instantly detected you," said he; "but this was art copying nature, and it may be years before such a triumph of illusion is again effected under so many adverse circumstances."

"You are very good, Sir Charles," was the reply. "You

flatter me. It was one of those things which look greater than they are. Nobody here knew Bracegirdle but Mr. Cibber; Mr. Cibber cannot see well without his glasses, and I got rid of one of the candles; I sent one of the imps of the theatre to knock it down. I know Mrs. Bracegirdle by heart. I drink tea with her every Sunday. I had her dress on, and I gave the old boy her words and her way of thinking. It was mere mimicry; it was nothing compared with what I once did; but, a-hem!"

"Pray tell us!"

"I am afraid I shall shock your friend. I see he is not a wicked man like you, and perhaps does not know what good-for-nothing creatures actresses are."

"He is not so ignorant as he looks," replied Sir Charles.

"That is not quite the answer I expected, Sir Charles," replied this lively lady; "but it serves me right for fishing on dry land. Well, then, you must know a young gentleman courted me. I forget whether I liked him or not; but you will fancy I hated him, for I promised to marry him. You must understand, gentlemen, that I was sent into the world, not to act, which I abominate, but to chronicle small beer and teach an army of little brats their letters; so this word 'wife' and that word 'chimney-corner' took possession of my mind, and a vision of darning stockings for a large party, all my own, filled my heart; and really I felt quite grateful to the little brute that was to give me all this, and he would have had such a wife as men never do have, still less deserve. But one fine day that the theatre left me time to examine his manner towards me I instantly discovered he was deceiving me. So I had him watched, and the little brute was going to marry another woman, and break it to me by degrees afterwards, etc. You know, Sir Charles? Ah! I see you do.

"I found her out; got an introduction to her father; went down to his house three days before the marriage, with a little coal-black moustache, regimentals, and what not,—made up, in short, with the art of my sex, gentlemen, and the impudence of yours.

"The first day I flirted and danced with the bride. The second I made love to her, and at night I let her know that her intended was a villain. I showed her letters of his; protestations, oaths of eternal fidelity to one Peg Woffington, 'who will die,' drawled I, 'if he betrays her.'

"And here, gentlemen, mark the justice of Heaven. I received a back-handed slap: 'Peg Woffington! an actress! Oh, the villain!' cried she; 'let him marry the little vagabond. How dare he insult me with his hand that had been offered in such a quarter?'

"So, in a fit of virtuous indignation, the little hypocrite dismissed the little brute; in other words, she had fallen in love with me.

"I have not many happy hours, but I remember it was delicious to look out of my window, and at the same moment smell the honeysuckles and see my *perfide* dismissed under a heap of scorn and a pile of luggage he had brought down for his wedding tour.

"I scampered up to London, laughing all the way; and when I got home, if I remember right, I cried for two hours. How do you account for that?"

"I hope, Madam," said Vane, gravely, "it was remorse for having trifled with that poor young lady's heart; she had never injured you."

"But, Sir, the husband I robbed her of was a brute and a villain in his little way, and wicked, and good-for-nothing, etc. He would have deceived that poor little hypocrite, as he had this one," pointing to herself.

"That is not what I mean; you inspired her with an attachment never to be forgotten. Poor lady, how many sleepless nights has she passed since then; how many

times has she strained her eyes to see her angel lover returning to her! She will not forget in two years the love it cost you but two days to inspire. The powerful should be merciful. Ah! I fear you have no heart."

These words had no sooner burst from Mr. Vane than he was conscious of the strange liberty he had taken, and, indeed, the bad taste he had been guilty of; and this feeling was not lessened when he saw Mrs. Woffington colour up to the temples. Her eyes, too, glittered like basilisks; but she said nothing, which was remarkable in her, whose tongue was the sword of a *maître d'armes*.

Sir Charles eyed his friend in a sly, satirical manner; he then said, laughingly: "In two months *she married a third!* Don't waste your sympathy," and turned the talk into another channel; and soon after, Mrs. Woffington's maid appearing at the door, she curtsied to both gentlemen and left the theatre. Sir Charles Pomander accompanied Mr. Vane a little way.

"What becomes of her innocence?" was his first word.

"One loses sight of it in her immense talent," said the lover.

"She certainly is clever in all that bears upon her business," was the reply; "but I noticed you were a little shocked with her indelicacy in telling us that story, and still more in having it to tell."

"Indelicacy? No!" said Vane; "the little brute deserved it. Good Heavens! to think that 'a little brute' might have married that angel, and actually broke faith to lose her; it is incredible,—the crime is diluted by the absurdity."

"Have you heard him tell the story? No? Then take my word for it you have not heard the facts of the case."

"Ah! you are prejudiced against her?"

"On the contrary, I like her. But I know that with all women the present lover is an angel and the past a demon, and so on in turn. And I know that if Satan

were to enter the women of the stage, with the wild idea of impairing their veracity, he would come out of their minds a greater liar than he went in, and the innocent darlings would never know their spiritual father had been at them."

Doubtful whether this sentiment and period could be improved, Sir Charles parted with his friend, leaving his sting in him like a friend. The other's reflections as he sauntered home were not strictly those of a wise, well-balanced mind; they ran in this style:—

"When she said, 'Is not that to praise my person at the expense of my wit?' I ought to have said: 'Nay, Madame; could your wit disguise your person, it would betray itself, so you would still shine confessed,' and instead of that I said nothing."

He then ran over in his mind all the opportunities he had for putting in something smart, and bitterly regretted those lost opportunities; and made the smart things, and beat the air with them. Then his cheeks tingled when he remembered that he had almost scolded her; and he concocted a very different speech, and straightway repeated it in imagination.

This is lovers' pastime; I own it funny, but it is open to one objection: this single practice of sitting upon eggs no longer chickenable, carried to a habit, is capable of turning a solid intellect into a liquid one, and ruining a mind's career.

We leave Mr. Vane, therefore, with a hope that he will not do it every night; and we follow his friend to the close of our chapter.

Hey for a definition!

What is diplomacy? Is it folly, in a coat that looks like sagacity? Had Sir Charles Pomander, instead of watching Mr. Vane and Mrs. Woffington, asked the former whether he admired the latter, and whether the latter responded, straightforward Vane would have told him

the whole truth in a minute. Diplomacy therefore was, as it often is, a waste of time.

But diplomacy did more in this case, it *sapienter descendebat in fossam;* it fell on its nose with gymnastic dexterity, as it generally does, upon my word.

To watch Mrs. Woffington's face *vis à vis* Mr. Vane, Pomander introduced Vane to the green-room of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. By this Pomander learned nothing, because Mrs. Woffington had, with a wonderful appearance of openness, the closest face in Europe when she chose.

On the other hand, by introducing this country gentleman to this green-room, he gave a mighty impulse and opportunity to Vane's love,—an opportunity which he forgot the timid, inexperienced Damon might otherwise never have found.

Here Diplomacy was not policy, for, as my sagacious reader has perhaps divined, Sir Charles Pomander *was after her himself.*

CHAPTER III

YES; Sir Charles was *after* Mrs. Woffington. I use that phrase because it is a fine, generic one, suitable to different kinds of love-making.

Mr. Vane's sentiments were an inexplicable compound; but respect, enthusiasm, and deep admiration were the uppermost. The good Sir Charles was no enigma; he had a vacancy in his establishment,—a very high situation, too, for those who like that sort of thing,—the head of his table, his left hand when he drove in the Park, &c. To this he proposed to promote Mrs. Woffington. She was handsome and witty, and he liked her. But that was not what caused him to pursue her,—slow, sagacious, inevitable, as a beagle.

She was celebrated, and would confer great *éclat* on him. The scandal of possessing her was a burning temptation. Women admire celebrity in a man; but men adore it in a woman.

> "The world," says Philip, "is a famous man;
> What will not women love, so taught?"

I will try to answer this question.

The women will more readily forgive disgusting physical deformity for Fame's sake, than we. They would embrace with more rapture a famous ourang-outang than we an illustrious chimpanzee; but when it comes to moral deformity the tables are turned.

Had the Queen pardoned Mr. Greenacre and Mrs. Manning, would the great rush have been on the hero or

the heroine? Why, on Mrs. Macbeth! To her would the blackguards have brought honourable proposals, and the gentry liberal ones.

Greenacre would have found more female admirers than I ever shall; but the grand stream of sexual admiration would have set Mariawards. This fact is as dark as night; but it is as sure as the sun.

The next day "the friends" (most laughable of human substantives!) met in the theatre, and again visited the green-room; and this time Vane determined to do himself more justice. He was again disappointed; the actress's manner was ceremoniously polite. She was almost constantly on the stage, and in a hurry when off it; and when there was a word to be got with her the ready, glib Sir Charles was sure to get it. Vane could not help thinking it hard that a man who professed no respect for her should thus keep the light from him; and he could hardly conceal his satisfaction when Pomander, at night, bade him farewell for a fortnight. Pressing business took Sir Charles into the country.

The good Sir Charles, however, could not go without leaving his sting behind as a companion to his friend. He called on Mr. Vane, and after a short preface, containing the words, "our friendship," "old kindness," "my greater experience," he gravely warned him against Mrs. Woffington.

"Not that I would say this if you could take her for what she is, and amuse yourself with her as she will with you, if she thinks it worth her while. But I see you have a heart, and she will make a football of it, and torment you beyond all you have ever conceived of human anguish."

Mr. Vane coloured high, and was about to interrupt the speaker; but he continued:—

"There, I am in a hurry. But ask Quin, or anybody who knows her history; you will find she has had scores

of lovers, and no one remains her friend after they part."

"Men are such villains!"

"Very likely," was the reply; "but twenty men don't ill-use one good woman; those are not the proportions. Adieu."

This last hit frightened Mr. Vane; he began to look into himself; he could not but feel that he was a mere child in this woman's hands; and more than that, his conscience told him that if his heart should be made a football of, it would only be a just and probable punishment. For there were particular reasons why he, of all men, had no business to look twice at any woman whose name was Woffington.

That night he avoided the green-room, though he could not forego the play; but the next night he determined to stay at home altogether. Accordingly, at five o'clock, the astounded box-keeper wore a visage of dismay,—there was no shilling for him; and Mr. Vane's nightly shilling had assumed the sanctity of salary in his mind.

Mr. Vane strolled disconsolate; he strolled by the Thames, he strolled up and down the Strand; and finally, having often admired the wisdom of moths in their gradual approach to what is not good for them, he strolled into the green-room, Covent Garden, and sat down. When there he did not feel happy. Besides, she had always been cold to him, and had given no sign of desiring his acquaintance, still less of recognition.

Mr. Vane had often seen a weathercock at work, and he had heard a woman compared to it; but he had never realized the simplicity, beauty, and justice of the simile. He was therefore surprised, as well as thrilled, when Mrs. Woffington, so cool, ceremonious, and distant hitherto, walked up to him in the green-room with a face quite wreathed in smiles, and without preliminary, thanked him for all the beautiful flowers he had sent her.

"What, Mrs. Woffington—what, you recognise me?"

"Of course, and have been foolish enough to feel quite supported by the thought I had at least one friend in the house. But," said she, looking down, "now you must not be angry; here are some stones that have fallen somehow among the flowers; I am going to give you them back, because I value flowers, so I cannot have them mixed with anything else; but don't ask me for a flower back," added she, seeing the colour mount on his face, "for I would not give one of them to you, or anybody."

Imagine the effect of this on a romantic disposition like Mr. Vane's.

He told her how glad he was that she could distinguish his features amidst the crowd of her admirers; he confessed he had been mortified when he found himself, as he thought, entirely a stranger to her. She interrupted him.

"Do you know your friend Sir Charles Pomander? No! I am almost sure you do; well, he is a man I do not like. He is deceitful; besides, he is a wicked man. There, to be plain with you, he was watching me all that night, the first time you came here, and because I saw he was watching me I would not know who you were, nor anything about you."

"But you looked as if you had never seen me before!"

"Of course I did, when I had made up my mind to," said the actress, naïvely.

"Sir Charles has left London for a fortnight; so if he is the only obstacle, I hope you will know me every night."

"Why, you sent me no flowers yesterday, or to-day."

"But I will to-morrow."

"Then I am sure I shall know your face again; good-bye. Won't you see me in the last act, and tell me how ill I do it?"

"Oh, yes!" and he hurried to his box; and so the actress secured one pair of hands for her last act.

He returned to the green-room, but she did not revisit that verdant bower. The next night, after the usual compliments, she said to him, looking down with a sweet engaging air,—

"I sent a messenger into the country to know about that lady."

"What lady," said Vane, scarcely believing his senses.

"That you were so unkind to me about."

"I, unkind to you? What a brute I must be!"

"My meaning is, you justly rebuked me, only you should not tell an actress she has no heart,—that is always understood. Well, Sir Charles Pomander said she married a third in two months."

"And did she?"

"No, it was in six weeks,—that man never tells the truth; and since then she has married a fourth."

"I am glad of it!"

"So am I, since you awakened my conscience."

Delicious flattery! and of all flattery the sweetest when a sweet creature does flattery, not merely utters it.

After this Vane made no more struggles; he surrendered himself to the charming seduction, and as his advances were respectful, but ardent and incessant, he found himself at the end of a fortnight Mrs. Woffington's professed lover.

They wrote letters to each other every day. On Sunday they went to church together in the morning, and spent the afternoon in the suburbs wherever grass was and dust was not.

In the next fortnight poor Vane thought he had pretty well fathomed this extraordinary woman's character. Plumb the Atlantic with an eighty fathom line, Sir!

"She is religious," said he; "she loves a church much better than a play-house, and she never laughs nor goes to sleep in church as I do. And she is breaking me of swearing—by degrees. She says that no fashion can justify what is profane, and that it must be vulgar as well as wicked. And she is frankness and simplicity itself."

Another thing that charmed him was her disinterestedness. She ordered him to buy her a present every day, but it was never to cost above a shilling. If an article could be found that cost exactly tenpence (a favorite sum of hers) she was particularly pleased, and these shilling presents were received with a flush of pleasure and brightening eyes; but when one day he appeared with a diamond necklace, it was taken very coldly, he was not even thanked for it, and he was made to feel, once for all, that the tenpenny ones were the best investments towards her favour.

Then he found out that she was very prudent and rather stingy, of Spartan simplicity in her diet, and a scorner of dress off the stage. To redeem this she was charitable, and her charity and her economy sometimes had a sore fight, during which she was peevish, poor little soul.

One day she made him a request.

"I can't bear you should think me worse than I am, and I don't want you to think me better than I am."

Vane trembled.

"But don't speak to others about me; promise, and I will promise to tell you my whole story, whenever you are entitled to such a confidence."

"When shall I be entitled to it?"

"When I am sure you love me."

"Do you doubt that now?"

"Yes! I think you love me, but I am not sure."

"Margaret, remember I have known you much longer than you have known me."

"No!"

"Yes! Two months before we ever spoke I lived upon your face and voice."

"That is to say, you looked from your box at me upon the stage; and did I not look from the stage at you?"

"Never! you always looked at the pit, and my heart used to sink."

"On the 17th of May you first came into that box. I noticed you a little; the next day I noticed you a little more; I saw you fancied you liked me; after a while I could not have played without you."

Here was delicious flattery again, and poor Vane believed every word of it.

As for her request and her promise, she showed her wisdom in both these. As Sir Charles observed, it is a wonderful point gained if you allow a woman to tell her story her own way.

How the few facts that are allowed to remain get moulded and twisted out of ugly forms into pretty shapes by those supple, dexterous fingers!

This present story cannot give the life of Mrs. Woffington, but only one great passage therein, as do the epic and dramatic writers; but since there was often great point in any sentences spoken on important occasions by this lady, I will just quote her defence of herself. The reader may be sure she did not play her weakest card; let us give her the benefit.

One day she and Kitty Clive were at it ding-dong; the green-room was full of actors, male and female, but there were no strangers, and the ladies were saying things which the men of this generation only think; at last Mrs. Woffington finding herself roughly, and, as she thought, unjustly handled, turned upon the as-

sembly and said: "What man did ever I ruin in all my life? Speak who can!"

And there was a dead silence.

"What woman is there here at as much as three pounds per week even, that hasn't ruined two at the very least?"

Report says there was a dead silence again, until Mrs. Clive perked up, and said she had only ruined one, and that was his own fault!

Mrs. Woffington declined to attach weight to this example. "Kitty Clive is the hook without the bait," said she; and the laugh turned, as it always did, against Peggy's antagonist.

Thus much was speedily shown to Mr. Vane, that whatever were Mrs. Woffington's intentions towards him, interest had at present nothing to do with them; indeed, it was made clear that even were she to surrender her liberty to him, it would only be as a princess, forging golden chains for herself with her own royal hand.

Another fortnight passed to the mutual satisfaction of the lovers. To Vane it was a dream of rapture to be near this great creature, whom thousands admired at such a distance; to watch over her, to take her to the theatre in a warm shawl, to stand at the wing and receive her as she came radiant from her dressing-room, to watch her from her rear as she stood like some power about to descend on the stage, to see her falcon-like swoop upon the said stage, and hear the burst of applause that followed, as the report does the flash; to compare this with the spiritless crawl with which common artists went on, tame from their first note to their last; to take her hand when she came off, feel how her nerves were strung like a greyhound's after a race, and her whole frame in a high, even glow, with the great Pythoness excitement of art.

And to have the same great creature leaning her head on his shoulder, and listening with a charming complacency, whilst he purred to her of love and calm delights, alternate with still greater triumphs; for he was to turn dramatic writer, for her sake was to write plays,—a woman the hero; and love was to inspire him, and passion supply the want of pencraft. (You make me laugh, Mr. Vane!)

All this was heavenly.

And then with all her dash, and fire, and bravado, she was a thorough woman.

"Margaret!"

"Ernest!"

"I want to ask you a question. Did you really cry because that Miss Bellamy had dresses from Paris?"

"It does not seem very likely."

"No, but tell me; did you?"

"Who said I did?"

"Mr. Cibber."

"Old fool!"

"Yes, but did you?"

"Did I what?"

"Cry!"

"Ernest, the minx's dresses were beautiful."

"No doubt. But did you cry?"

"And mine were dirty; I don't care about gilt rags, but dirty dresses, ugh!"

"Tell me, then."

"Tell you what?"

"Did you cry or not?"

"Ah! he wants to find out whether I am a fool, and despise me."

"No, I think I should love you better; for hitherto I have seen no weakness in you, and it makes me uncomfortable."

"Be comforted! Is it not a weakness to like you?"

"You are free from that weakness, or you would gratify my curiosity."

"Be pleased to state, in plain intelligible English, what you require of me."

"I want to know, in one word, did you cry or not?"

"Promise to tease me no more, then, and I'll tell you."

"I promise."

"You won't despise me?"

"Despise you! of course not."

"Well, then—I don't remember."

On another occasion, they were seated in the dusk, by the side of the canal in the Park, when a little animal began to potter about on an adjacent bank.

Mrs. Woffington contemplated it with curiosity and delight.

"Oh, you pretty creature!" said she. "Now you are a rabbit,—at least, I think so."

"No," said Vane, innocently, "that is a rat."

"Ah! ah! ah!" screamed Mrs. Woffington, and pinched his arm. This frightened the rat, who disappeared. She burst out laughing: "There's a fool! The thing did not frighten me, and the name did. Depend upon it, it's true what they say—that off the stage I am the greatest fool there is. I'll never be so absurd again. Ah! ah! ah! here it is again" (scream and pinch, as before). "Do take me from this horrid place, where monsters come from the great deep."

And she flounced away, looking daggers askant at the place the rat had vacated in equal terror.

All this was silly, but it pleases us men, and contrast is so charming! This same fool was brimful of talent, —and cunning, too, for that matter.

She played late that night, and Mr. Vane saw the same creature, who dared not stay where she was liable to a distant rat, spring upon the stage as a gay rake,

and flash out her rapier, and act valour's king to the life, and seem ready to eat up everybody, King Fear included; and then, after her brilliant sally upon the public, Sir Harry Wildair came and stood beside Mr. Vane.

Her bright skin, contrasted with her powdered periwig, became dazzling. She used little rouge, but that little made her eyes two balls of black lightning. From her high instep to her polished forehead, all was symmetry. Her leg would have been a sculptor's glory; and the curve from her waist to her knee was Hogarth's line itself.

She stood like Mercury new lighted on a heaven-kissing hill. She placed her foot upon the ground, as she might put her hand upon her lover's shoulder. We indent it with our eleven undisguised stone.

Such was Sir Harry Wildair, who stood by Mr. Vane, glittering with diamond buckles, gorgeous with rich satin breeches, velvet coat, ruffles, *pictae vestis et auri;* and as she bent her long eye-fringes down on him (he was seated), all her fiery charms gradually softened and quivered down to womanhood.

"The first time I was here," said Vane, "my admiration of you broke out to Mr. Cibber; and what do you think he said?"

"That you praised me for me to hear you. Did you?"

"Acquit me of such meanness."

"Forgive me. It is just what I should have done, had I been courting an actress."

"I think you have not met many ingenuous spirits, dear friend?"

"Not one, my child."

This was a phrase she often applied to him now.

"The old fellow pretended to hear what I said, too; and I am sure you did not—did you?"

"Guess."

"I guess not."

"I am afraid I must plead guilty. An actress's ears are so quick to hear praise, to tell you the truth, I did catch a word or two, and 'it told, Sir,—it told.' "

"You alarm me! At this rate I shall never know what you see, hear, or think, by your face."

"When you want to know anything, ask me, and I will tell you; but nobody else shall learn anything,—nor even you, any other way."

"Did you hear the feeble tribute of praise I was paying you when you came in?" inquired Vane.

"No. You did not say that my voice had the compass and variety of nature, and my movements were free and beautiful, whilst the others when in motion were stilts, and coffeepots when in repose, did you?"

"Something of the sort, I believe," cried Vane, laughing.

"I melted from one fine statue into another; I restored the Antinous to his true sex.—Goose!—Painters might learn their art from me (in my dressing-room, no doubt), and orators revive at my lips the music of Athens, that quelled mad mobs and princes drunk with victory.—Silly fellow!—Praise was never so sweet to me," murmured she, inclining like a goddess of love towards him; and he fastened on two velvet lips that did not shun the sweet attack, but gently parted with a heavenly sigh; while her heaving bosom, and yielding frame, and swimming eyes confessed her conqueror.

That morning Mr. Vane had been dispirited, and apparently self-discontented; but at night he went home in a state of mental intoxication. His poetic enthusiasm, his love, his vanity, were all gratified at once. And all these, singly, have conquered Prudence and Virtue a million times.

She had confessed to him that she was disposed to

risk her happiness on him; she had begged him to submit to a short probation; and she had promised, if her confidence and esteem remained unimpaired at the close of that period,—which was not to be an unhappy one,—to take advantage of the summer holidays, and cross the water with him, and forget everything in the world with him, but love.

How was it that the very next morning clouds chased one another across his face? Was it that men are happy but while the chase is doubtful? Was it the letter from Pomander announcing his return, and sneeringly inquiring whether he was still the dupe of Peg Woffington? Or was it that same mysterious disquiet which attacked him periodically, and then gave way for a while to pleasure and her golden dreams?

The next day was to be a day of delight. He was to entertain her at his own house; and to do her honour, he had asked Mr. Cibber, Mr. Quinn, and other actors, critics, &c.

Our friend Sir Charles Pomander had been guilty of two ingenuities: first, he had written three or four letters, full of respectful admiration, to Mrs. Woffington, of whom he spoke slightingly to Vane; second, he had made a disingenuous purchase.

This purchase was Pompey, Mrs. Woffington's little black slave. It is a horrid fact, but Pompey did not love his mistress; he was a little enamoured of her, as small boys are apt to be, but on the whole, a sentiment of hatred slightly predominated in his little black bosom.

It was not without excuse.

This lady was subject to two unpleasant companions, sorrow and bitterness. About twice a week she would cry for two hours; and after this class of fit she generally went abroad, and made a round of certain poor or

sick *protégés* she had, and returned smiling and cheerful.

But other twice a week she might be seen to sit upon her chair, contracted into half her size, and looking daggers at the universe in general, the world in particular; and on these occasions, it must be owned, she stayed at home, and sometimes whipped Pompey.

Pompey had not the sense to reflect that he ought to have been whipped every day, or the *esprit de corps* to be consoled by observing that this sort of thing did his mistress good. What he felt was that his mistress, who did everything well, whipped him with energy and skill; it did not take ten seconds, but still, in that brief period, Pompey found himself dusted and polished off.

The sacred principle of justice was as strong in Mrs. Woffington as in the rest of her sex; she had not one grain of it. When she was not in her tantrums the mischievous imp was as sacred from check or remonstrance as a monkey, or a lap-dog; and several female servants left the house on his account.

But Nemesis overtook him in the way we have hinted, and it put his little black pipe out.

The lady had taken him out of great humanity; he was fed like a game-cock, and dressed like a barbaric prince; and once, when he was ill, his mistress watched him, and nursed him, and tended him with the same white hand that plied the obnoxious whip; and when he died, she alone withheld her consent from his burial, and this gave him a chance black boys never get, and he came to again; but still these tarnation lickings "stuck in him gizzard." So when Sir Charles's agent proposed to him certain silver coins, cheap at a little treachery, the ebony ape grinned till he turned half-ivory, and became a spy in the house of his mistress.

The reader will have gathered that the good Sir

Charles had been quietly in London some hours before he announced himself as *paulo post futurum*.

Diamond cut diamond; a diplomatic stole this march upon an actress; and took her black pawn. One for Pomander! (Gun.)

CHAPTER IV

TRIPLET, the Cerberus of art, who had the first bark in this legend, and has since been out of hearing, ran from Lambeth to Covent Garden, on receipt of Mr. Vane's note. But ran he never so quick, he had built a full-sized castle in the air before he reached Bow Street.

The letter hinted at an order upon his muse for amatory verse,—delightful task, cheering prospect.

Bid a man whose usual lot it is to break stones for the parish at tenpence the cubic yard,—bid such an one play at marbles with stone taws for half an hour per day, and pocket one pound one. Bid a poor horse who has drawn those stones about, and browsed short grass by the wayside,—bid him canter a few times round a grassy ring, and then go to his corn. In short, bid Rosinante change with Pegasus, and you do no more than Mr. Vane's letter held out to Triplet.

The amatory verse of that day was not up-hill work. There was a beaten track on a dead level, and you followed it. You told the tender creature, with a world of circumlocution, that, "without joking now," she was a leper, ditto a tigress, item marble. You next feigned a lucid interval, and to be on the point of detesting your monster, but in twenty more verses love became, as usual, stronger than reason, and you wound up your rotten yarn thus:—

You hugged a golden chain. You drew deeper into your wound a barbed shaft, like—(any wild animal will do; no one of them is such an ass, so you had an equal

title to all); and on looking back you saw with horrible complacency that you had inflicted one hundred locusts, five feet long, upon oppressed humanity.

Wont to travel over acres of canvas for a few shillings, and roods of paper on bare speculation, Triplet knew he could make a thousand a year at the above work without thinking.

He came therefore to the box-keeper with his eyes glittering.

"Mr. Vane?"

"Just gone out with a gentleman."

"I'll wait, then."

Now Mr. Vane, we know, was in the green-room, and went home by the stage-door. The last thing he thought of was poor Triplet,—the rich do not dream how they disappoint the poor. Triplet's castle fell as many a predecessor had. When the lights were put out he left the theatre with a bitter sigh.

"If this gentlemen knew how many sweet children I have, and what a good, patient, suffering wife, sure he would not have chosen me to make a fool of!" said the poor fellow to himself.

In Bow Street he turned and looked back upon the theatre. How gloomy and grand it loomed!

"Ah!" thought he, "if I could but conquer you!—and why not? All history shows that nothing is unconquerable except perseverance. Hannibal conquered the Alps, and I'll conquer you," cried Triplet, firmly. "Yes, this visit is not lost; here I register a vow,—I will force my way into that mountain of masonry, or perish in the attempt."

Triplet's most unpremeditated thoughts and actions often savoured ridiculously of the sublime. Then and there, gazing with folded arms on this fortress of Thespis, the polytechnic man organized his first assault. The next evening he made it.

Five months previously he had sent the manager three great, large tragedies. He knew the aversion a theatrical manager has to read a manuscript play not recommended by influential folk,—an aversion which always has been carried to superstition,—so he hit on the following scheme:—

He wrote Mr. Rich a letter; in this he told Mr. Rich that he (Triplet) was aware what a quantity of trash is offered every week to a manager, how disheartening it must be to read it all, and how natural, after a while, to read none. Therefore, he (Triplet) had provided that Mr. Rich might economise his time, and yet not remain in ignorance of the dramatic treasure that lay ready to his hand.

"The soul of a play," continued Triplet, "is the plot or fable. A gentleman of your experience can decide at once whether a plot or story is one to take the public!"

So then he drew out, in full, the three plots. He wrote these plots in verse! Heaven forgive us all, he really did. There were also two margins left; on one, which was narrow, he jotted down the *locale* per page of the most brilliant passages; on the other margin, which was as wide as the column of the plot, he made careful drawings of the personages in the principal dramatic situations; scrolls issued from their mouths, on which were written the words of fire that were flowing from each in these eruptions of the dramatic action. All was referred to pages in the manuscripts.

"By this means, Sir," resumed the latter, "you will gut my fish in a jiffy; permit me to recall that expression, with apologies for my freedom. I would say, you will, in a few minutes of your valuable existence, skim the cream of Triplet."

This author's respect for the manager's time carried him into farther and unusual details.

"Breakfast," said he, "is a quiet meal. Let me respectfully suggest, that by placing one of my plots on the table, with, say the sugar-basin upon it (this, again, is a mere suggestion), and the play it appertains to on your other side, you can readily judge my work without disturbing the avocations of the day, and master a play in the twinkling of a teacup; forgive my facetiousness. This day month, at ten of the clock, I shall expect," said Triplet, with sudden severity, "Sir, your decision."

Then gliding back to the courtier, he formally disowned all special title to the consideration he expected from Mr. Rich's well-known courtesy; still, he begged permission to remind that gentleman that he had six years ago painted for him a large scene, illuminated by two great poetical incidents,—a red sun, of dimensions never seen out of doors in this or any country; and an ocean of sand, yellower than up to that time had been attained in art or nature; and that once, when the audience, late in the evening, had suddenly demanded a popular song from Mr. Nokes, he (Triplet) seeing the orchestra thinned by desertion, and nugatory by intoxication, had started from the pit, resuscitated with the whole contents of his snuff-box the bass fiddle, snatched the leader's violin, and carried Mr. Nokes triumphantly through; that thunders of applause had followed, and Mr. Nokes had kindly returned thanks *for both;* but that he (Triplet) had hastily retired to evade the manager's acknowledgments, preferring to wait an opportunity like the present, when both interests could be conciliated, &c.

This letter he posted at its destination, to save time, and returned triumphant home. He had now forgiven and almost forgotten Vane; and had reflected that, after all, the drama was his proper walk.

"My dear," said he to Mrs. Triplet, "this family is

on the eve of a great triumph!" Then, inverting that order of the grandiloquent and the homely which he invented in our first chapter, he proceeded to say: "I have reared in a single day a new avenue, by which histrionic greatness, hitherto obstructed, may become accessible. Wife, I think I have done the trick at last. Lysimachus!" added he, "let a libation be poured out on so smiling an occasion, and a burnt-offering rise to propitiate the celestial powers. Run to the 'Sun,' you dog. Three pennyworth of ale, and a hap'orth o' tobacco."

Ere the month was out, I am sorry to say, the Triplets were reduced to a state of beggary. Mrs. Triplet's health had long been failing; and although her duties at her little theatre were light and occasional, the manager was obliged to discharge her, since she could not be depended upon.

The family had not enough to eat! Think of that! They were not warm at night, and they felt gnawing and faintness often by day. Think of that!

Fortune was unjust here. The man was laughable, and a goose, and had no genius either for writing, painting, or acting; but in that he resembled most writers, painters, and actors of his own day and ours. He was not beneath the average of what men call art, and it is art's antipodes.—treadmill artifice.

Other fluent ninnies shared gain, and even fame, and were called "pen-men," in Triplet's day. Other ranters were quietly getting rich by noise. Other liars and humbugs were painting out o' doors indoors, and eating mutton instead of thistles for drenched stinging-nettles, yclept trees; for block-tin clouds; for butlers' pantry seas, and garret-conceived lakes; for molten sugar-candy rivers; for airless atmosphere and sunless air; for carpet nature, and cold, dead fragments of an earth all soul and living glory to every cultivated eye

but a routine painter's. Yet the man of many such mediocrities could not keep the bot boiling. We suspect that to those who would rise in life, even strong versatility is a very doubtful good, and weak versatility ruination.

At last, the bitter, weary month was gone, and Triplet's eye brightened gloriously. He donned his best suit; and whilst tying his cravat, lectured his family. First, he complimented them upon their deportment in adversity; hinted that moralists, not experience, had informed him prosperity was far more trying to the character; put them solemnly on their guard, down to Lucy, ætat, five, that they were *morituri* and *æ*, and must be pleased to abstain from "insolent gladness" upon his return.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity!" continued this cheerful monitor. "If we had not been hard-up this while, we should not come with a full relish to meat three times a week, which, unless I am an ass, and I don't see myself in that light," said Triplet, drily, "will, I apprehend, be, after this day, the primary condition of our future existence."

"James, take the picture with you," said Mrs. Triplet, in one of those calm, little, desponding voices that fall upon the soul so agreeably when one is a cock-a-hoop, and desires, with permission, so to remain.

"What on earth am I to take Mrs. Woffington's portrait for?"

"We have nothing in the house," said the wife, blushing.

Triplet's eye glittered like a rattlesnake's.

"The intimation is eccentric," said he. "Are you mad, Jane? Pray," continued he, veiling his wrath in scornful words, "is it requisite, heroic, or judicious, on the eve, or more correctly the morn, of affluence, to deposit an unfinished work of art with a mercenary

relation. Hang it, Jane! would you really have me pawn Mrs. Woffington to-day?"

"James," said Jane, steadily, "the manager may disappoint you,—we have often been disappointed; so take the picture with you. They will **give** you ten shillings on it."

Triplet was of those who see things roseate; Mrs. Triplet, lurid.

"Madam," said the poet, "for the first time in our conjugal career your commands deviate so entirely from reason that I respectfully withdraw that implicit obedience which has hitherto constituted my principal reputation. I'm hanged if I do it, Jane!"

"Dear James, to oblige me!"

"That alters the case; you confess it is unreasonable?"

"Oh yes! it is only to oblige me."

"Enough!" said Triplet, whose tongue was often a flail that fell on friend, foe, and self indiscriminately. "Allow it to be unreasonable, and I do it as a matter of course,—to please you, Jane."

Accordingly the good soul wrapped it in green baize; but to relieve his mind he was obliged to get behind his wife, and shrug his shoulders to Lysimachus and the eldest girl, as who should say *voilà bien une femme votre mère à vous!*

At last he was off, in high spirits. He reached Covent Garden at half-past ten, and there the poor fellow was sucked into our narrative whirlpool.

We must, however, leave him for a few minutes.

CHAPTER V

SIR Charles Pomander was detained in the country much longer than he expected.

He was rewarded by a little adventure. As he cantered up to London with two servants and a post-boy, all riding on horses ordered in relays beforehand, he came up with an antediluvian coach, stuck fast by the roadside. Looking into the window, with the humane design of quizzing the elders who should be there, he saw a young lady of surpassing beauty. This altered the case; Sir Charles instantly drew bridle and offered his services.

The lady thanked him, and being an innocent country lady, she opened those sluices, her eyes, and two tears gently trickled down, while she told him how eager she was to reach London, and how mortified at this delay.

The good Sir Charles was touched. He leaped his horse over a hedge, galloped to a farm-house in sight, and returned with ropes and rustics. These and Sir Charles's horses soon drew the coach out of some stiffish clay.

The lady thanked him, and thanked him, and thanked him, with heightening colour and beaming eyes, and he rode away like a hero.

Before he had gone five miles he became thoughtful and self-dissatisfied. Finally, his remorse came to a head; he called to him the keenest of his servants, Hundson, and ordered him to ride back past the carriage, then follow and put up at the same inn, to learn

who the lady was, and whither going; and this knowledge gained, to ride into town full speed, and tell his master all about it. Sir Charles then resumed his complacency, and cantered into London that same evening.

Arriving there, he set himself in earnest to cut out his friend with Mrs. Woffington. He had already caused his correspondence with that lady to grow warm and more tender by degrees. Keeping a copy of his last, he always knew where he was. Cupid's barometer rose by rule; and so he arrived by just gradations at an artful climax, and made her in terms of chivalrous affection, an offer of a house, etc., three hundred a year, etc., not forgetting his heart, etc. He knew that the ladies of the stage have an ear for flattery, and an eye to the main chance.

The good Sir Charles felt sure that however she might flirt with Vane or others, she would not forego a position for any disinterested *penchant*. Still, as he was a close player, he determined to throw a little cold water on that flame. His plan, like everything truly scientific, was simple.

"I'll run her down to him, and ridicule him to her," resolved this faithful friend and lover dear.

He began with Vane. He found him just leaving his own house. After the usual compliments, some such dialogue as this took place between Telemachus and pseudo Mentor:—

"I trust you are not really in the power of this actress?"

"You are the slave of a word," replied Vane. "Would you confound black and white because both are colours? She is like that sisterhood in nothing but a name. Even on the stage they have nothing in common. They are puppets,—all attitude and trick; she is all ease, grace, and nature."

"Nature!" cried Pomander. *"Laissez-moi tranquille.* They have artifice,—nature's libel. She has art,—nature's counterfeit."

"Her voice is truth told by music," cried the poetical lover; "theirs are jingling instruments of falsehood."

"They are all instruments," said the satirist; "she is rather the best tuned and played."

"Her face speaks in every lineament; theirs are rouged and wrinkled masks."

"Her mask is the best made, mounted, and moved; that is all."

"She is a fountain of true feeling."

"No; a pipe that conveys it without spilling or holding a drop."

"She is an angel of talent, Sir."

"She's a devil of deception."

"She is a divinity to worship."

"She's a woman to fight shy of. There is not a woman in London better known," continued Sir Charles. "She is a fair actress on the boards, and a great actress off them; but I can tell you how to add a new charm to her."

"Heaven can only do that," said Vane, hastily.

"Yes, you can. Make her blush. Ask her for the list of your predecessors."

Vane winced visibly. He quickened his step, as if to get rid of this gadfly.

"I spoke to Mr. Quinn," said he, at last; "and he, who has no prejudice, paid her character the highest compliment."

"You have paid it the highest it admits," was the reply. "You have let it deceive you." Sir Charles continued in a more solemn tone: "Pray be warned. Why is it every man of intellect loves an actress once in his life, and no man of sense ever did it twice?"

This last hit, coming after the carte and tierce we

have described, brought an expression of pain to Mr. Vane's face. He said abruptly: "Excuse me, I desire to be alone for half an hour."

Machiavel bowed; and instead of taking offence, said, in a tone full of feeling: "Ah! I give you pain! But you are right; think it calmly over awhile, and you will see I advise you well."

He then made for the theatre, and the weakish personage he had been playing upon walked down to the river, almost ran, in fact. He wanted to be out of sight.

He got behind some houses, and then his face seemed literally to break loose from confinement; so anxious, sad, fearful, and bitter were the expressions that coursed each other over that handsome countenance.

What is the meaning of these hot and cold fits? It is not Sir Charles who has the power to shake Mr. Vane so without some help from within. *There is something wrong about this man!*

CHAPTER VI

MACHIAVEL entered the green-room, intending to wait for Mrs. Woffington, and carry out the second part of his plan.

He knew that weak minds cannot make head against ridicule, and with this pick-axe he proposed to clear the way, before he came to grave, sensible, business love with the lady. Machiavel was a man of talent. If he has been a silent personage hitherto, it is merely because it was not his cue to talk, but listen; otherwise he was rather a master of the art of speech. He could be insinuating, eloquent, sensible, or satirical, at will. This personage sat in the green-room. In one hand was his diamond snuff-box, in the other a richly laced handkerchief; his clouded cane reposed by his side.

There was an air of success about this personage. The gentle reader, however conceited a dog, could not see how he was to defeat Sir Charles, who was tall, stout, handsome, rich, witty, self-sufficient, cool, majestic, courageous, and in whom were united the advantages of a hard head, a tough stomach, and no heart at all. This great creature sat expecting Mrs. Woffington, like Olympian Jove awaiting Juno. But he was mortal after all; for suddenly the serenity of that adamantine countenance was disturbed; his eye dilated; his grace and dignity were shaken. He huddled his handkerchief into one pocket, his snuff-box into another, and forgot his cane. He ran to the door in unaffected terror.

Where are all his fine airs before a real danger?

Love, intrigue, diplomacy, were all driven from his mind; for he beheld that approaching, which is the greatest peril and disaster known to social man. He saw a bore coming into the room!

In a wild thirst for novelty, Pomander had once penetrated to Goodman's Fields Theatre; there he had unguardedly put a question to a carpenter behind the scene; a seedy-black poet instantly pushed the carpenter away (down a trap, it is thought), and answered it in seven pages, and in continuation was so vaguely communicative, that he drove Sir Charles back into the far West.

Sir Charles knew him again in a moment, and at sight of him bolted. They met at the door. "Ah, Mr. Triplet!" said the fugitive, "enchanted—to wish you good morning!" and he plunged into the hiding-places of the theatre.

"That is a very polite gentleman!" thought Triplet. He was followed by the call-boy, to whom he was explaining that his avocations, though numerous, would not prevent his paying Mr. Rich the compliment of waiting all day in his green-room, sooner than go without an answer to three important propositions, in which the town and the arts were concerned.

"What is your name?" said the boy of business to the man of words.

"Mr. Triplet," said Triplet.

"Triplet? There is something for you in the hall," said the urchin, and went off to fetch it.

"I knew it," said Triplet to himself; "they are accepted. There's a note in the hall to fix the reading." He then derided his own absurdity in having ever for a moment desponded. "Master of three arts, by each of which men grow fat, how was it possible he should starve all his days!"

He enjoyed a natural vanity for a few moments, and

then came more generous feelings. What sparkling eyes there would be in Lambeth to-day! The butcher, at sight of Mr. Rich's handwriting, would give him credit. Jane should have a new gown.

But when his tragedies were played, and he paid!—El Dorado!—his children should be the neatest in the street. Lysimachus and Roxalana should learn the English language, cost what it might; sausages should be diurnal; and he himself would not be puffed up, fat, lazy. No! he would work all the harder, be affable as ever, and above all, never swamp the father, husband and honest man, in the poet and the blackguard of sentiment.

Next his reflections took a business turn.

"These tragedies—the scenery? Oh! I shall have to paint it myself. The heroes? Well, they have nobody who will play them as I should. (This was true!) It will be hard work, all this; but then I shall be paid for it. I cannot go on this way; I must and will be paid separately for my branches."

Just as he came to this resolution the boy returned with a brown-paper parcel, addressed to Mr. James Triplet. Triplet weighed it in his hand; it was heavy. "How is this?" cried he. "Oh! I see," said he, "these are the tragedies. He sends them to me for some trifling alterations; managers always do." Triplet then determined to adopt these alterations, if judicious; for, argued he sensibly enough: "Managers are practical men; and we, in the heat of composition, sometimes (*sic!*) say more than is necessary, and become tedious."

With that he opened the parcel, and looked for Mr. Rich's communication; it was not in sight. He had to look between the leaves of the manuscripts for it; it was not there. He shook them; it did not fall out. He shook them as a dog shakes a rabbit,—nothing!

The tragedies were returned without a word. It

took him some time to realize the full weight of the blow; but at last he saw that the manager of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, declined to take a tragedy by Triplet into consideration or bare examination.

He turned dizzy for a moment. Something between a sigh and a cry escaped him, and he sank upon a covered bench that ran along the wall. His poor tragedies fell here and there upon the ground, and his head went down upon his hands, which rested on Mrs. Woffington's picture. His anguish was so sharp it choked his breath; when he recovered it, his eye bent down upon the picture. "Ah, Jane," he groaned, "you know this villainous world better than I!" He placed the picture gently on the seat (that picture must now be turned into bread), and slowly stooped for his tragedies. They had fallen hither and thither; he had to crawl about for them; he was an emblem of all the humiliations letters endure.

As he went after them on all-fours, more than one tear pattered on the dusty floor. Poor fellow!—he was Triplet, and could not have died without tinging the death-rattle with some absurdity; but after all, he was a father driven to despair; a castle-builder, with his work rudely scattered; an artist, brutally crushed and insulted by a greater dunce than himself.

Faint, sick, and dark, he sat a moment on the seat before he could find strength to go home and destroy all the hopes he had raised.

Whilst Triplet sat collapsed on the bench, fate sent into the room all in one moment, as if to insult his sorrow, a creature that seemed the goddess of gaiety, impervious to a care. She swept in with a bold, free step,—for she was rehearsing a man's part,—and thundered without rant, but with a spirit and fire and pace beyond the conception of our poor, tame actresses of 1852, these lines:—

"Now, by the joys
Which my soul still has uncontrolled pursued,
I would not turn aside from my least pleasure,
Though all thy force were armed to bar my way;
But, like the birds, great Nature's happy commoners,
Rifle the sweets—"

"I beg—your par—don, Sir!" holding the book on a level with her eye, she had nearly run over. "Two poets instead of one."

"Nay, Madam," said Triplet, admiring though sad, wretched but polite, "pray continue. Happy the hearer, and still happier the author of verses so spoken. Ah!"

"Yes," replied the lady, "if you could persuade authors what we do for them when we coax good music to grow on barren words. Are you an author, Sir?" added she, slily.

"In a small way, Madam. I have here three trifles,—tragedies."

Mrs. Woffington looked askant at them like a shy mare.

"Ah, Madam!" said Triplet, in one of his insane fits, "if I might but submit them to such a judgment as yours?"

He laid his hand on them. It was as when a strange dog sees us go to take up a stone.

The actress recoiled.

"I am no judge of such things," cried she, hastily.

Triplet bit his lip. He could have killed her. It was provoking, people would rather be hung than read a manuscript. Yet what hopeless trash they will read in crowds which was manuscript a day ago. *Les imbéciles!*

"No more is the manager of this theatre a judge of such things," cried the outraged quill-driver, bitterly.

"What! has he accepted them?" said needle-tongue.

"No, Madam, he has had them six months, and see, Madam, he has returned them me without a word." Triplet's lip trembled.

"Patience, my good Sir," was the merry reply. "Tragic authors should possess that, for they teach it to their audiences. Managers, Sir, are like Eastern monarchs, inaccessible but to slaves and sultanas. Do you know I called upon Mr. Rich fifteen times before I could see him?"

"You, Madam? Impossible!"

"Oh, it was years ago, and he has paid a hundred pounds for each of those little visits. Well, now, let me see, fifteen times; you must write twelve more tragedies, and then he will read *one*; and when he has read it, he will favour you with his judgment upon it; and when you have got that, you will have what all the world knows is not worth a farthing. He! he! he!

" 'And like the birds, gay Nature's happy commoners,
Rifle the sweets'—mum—mum—mum."

Her high spirits made Triplet sadder. To think that one word from this laughing lady would secure his work a hearing, and that he dared not ask her. She was up in the world, he was down. She was great, he was nobody. He felt a sort of chill at this woman,—all brains and no heart. He took his picture and his plays under his arms and crept sorrowfully away.

The actress's eye fell on him as he went off like a fifth act. His Don Quixote face struck her. She had seen it before.

"Sir," said she.

"Madam," said Triplet, at the door.

"We have met before. There, don't speak, I'll tell you who you are. Yours is a face that has been good to me, and I never forget them."

"Me, Madam!" said Triplet, taken aback. "I trust I know what is due to you better than to be good to you, Madam," said he, in his confused way.

"To be sure!" cried she; "it is Mr. Triplet, good Mr. Triplet!" And this vivacious dame, putting her book down, seized both Triplet's hands and shook them.

He shook hers warmly in return, out of excess of timidity, and dropped tragedies, and kicked at them convulsively when they were down, for fear they should be in her way, and his mouth opened, and his eyes glared.

"Mr. Triplet," said the lady, "do you remember an Irish orange girl you used to give sixpence to at Goodman's Fields, and pat her on the head and give her good advice, like a good old soul as you were? She took the sixpence."

"Madam," said Trip, recovering a grain of pomp, "singular as it may appear, I remember the young person; she was very engaging. I trust no harm hath befallen her, for methought I discovered, in spite of her brogue, a beautiful nature in her."

"Go along wid your blarney," answered a rich brogue; "an is it the comancher ye'd be putting on poor little Peggy?"

"Oh! oh, gracious!" gasped Triplet.

"Yes," was the reply; but into that "yes," she threw a whole sentence of meaning. "Fine cha-ney oranges!" chanted she, to put the matter beyond dispute.

"Am I really so honoured as to have patted you on that queen-like head?" and he glared at it.

"On the same head which now I wear," replied she, pompously. "I kept it for the convaynience hintirely, only there's more in it. Well, Mr. Triplet, you see what time has done for me; now tell me whether he has been as kind to you. Are you going to speak to me, Mr. Triplet?

As a decayed hunter stands lean and disconsolate, head poked forward like a goose's, but if hounds sweep by his paddock in full cry, followed by horses who are what he was not, he does by reason of the good blood that is and will be in his heart *dum spiritus hoss regit artus*, cock his ears, erect his tail, and trot fiery to his extremest hedge, and look over it, nostril distended, mane flowing, and neigh the hunt onward like a trumpet,—so Triplet, who had manhood at bottom, instead of whining out his troubles in the ear of encouraging beauty, as a sneaking spirit would, perked up, and resolved to put the best face upon it all before so charming a creature of the other sex.

"Yes, Madam," cried he, with the air of one who could have smacked his lips, "Providence has blessed me with an excellent wife and four charming children. My wife was Miss Chatterton,—you remember her?"

"Yes! Where is she playing now?"

"Why, Madam, her health is too weak for it."

"Oh! You were scene-painter. Do you still paint scenes?"

"With the pen, Madam, not the brush; as the wags said, I transferred the distemper from my canvas to my imagination." And Triplet laughed uproariously.

When he had done, Mrs. Woffington, who had joined the laugh, inquired quietly whether his pieces had met with success.

"Eminent—in the closet; the stage is to come!" and he smiled absurdly again.

The lady smiled back.

"In short," said Triplet, recapitulating, "being blessed with health, and more tastes in the arts than most, and a cheerful spirit, I should be wrong, Madam, to repine; and this day, in particular, is a happy one," added the rose colourist, "since the great Mrs. Woffing-

ton has deigned to remember me, and call me friend."

Such was Triplet's summary.

Mrs. Woffington drew out her memorandum-book, and took down her summary of the crafty Triplet's facts. So easy is it for us Triplets to draw the wool over the eyes of women and Woffingtons.

"Triplet, discharged from scene-painting, wife, no engagement; four children supported by his pen,—that is to say, starving; lose no time!"

She closed her book and smiled, and said:—

"I wish these things were comedies instead of trash-edies, as the French call them; we would cut one in half, and slice away the finest passages, and then I would act in it; and you would see how the stage-door would fly open at sight of the author."

"Oh, Heaven!" said poor Trip, excited by this picture. "I'll go home, and write a comedy this moment."

"Stay!" said she, "you had better leave the tragedies with me."

"My dear Madam! You will read them?"

"Ahem! I will make poor Rich read them."

"But, Madam, he has rejected them."

"That is the first step. Reading them comes after, when it comes at all. What have you got in that green baize?"

"In this green baize?"

"Well, in this green baize, then."

"Oh, Madam! nothing—nothing! To tell the truth, it is an adventurous attempt from memory. I saw you play Silvia, Madam; I was so charmed that I came every night. I took your face home with me,—forgive my presumption, Madam,—and I produced this faint adumbration, which I expose with diffidence."

So then he took the green baize off.

The colour rushed into her face; she was evidently

gratified. Poor, silly Mrs. Triplet was doomed to be right about this portrait.

"I will give you a sitting," said she. "You will find painting dull faces a better trade than writing dull tragedies. Work for other people's vanity, not your own; that is the art of art. And now I want Mr. Triplet's address."

"On the fly-leaf of each work, Madam," replied that florid author, "and also at the foot of every page which contains a particularly brilliant passage, I have been careful to insert the address of James Triplet, painter, actor, and dramatist, and Mrs. Woffington's humble, devoted servant." He bowed ridiculously low, and moved towards the door; but something gushed across his heart, and he returned with long strides to her. "Madam!" cried he, with a jaunty manner, "you have inspired a son of Thespis with dreams of eloquence; you have tuned in a higher key a poet's lyre; you have tinged a painter's existence with brighter colours, and —and—" His mouth worked still, but no more artificial words would come. He sobbed out, "and God in Heaven bless you, Mrs. Woffington!" and ran out of the room.

Mrs. Woffington looked after him with interest, for this confirmed her suspicions; but suddenly her expression changed, she wore a look we have not yet seen upon her,—it was a half-cunning, half-spiteful look. It was suppressed in a moment; she gave herself to her book, and presently Sir Charles Pomander sauntered into the room.

"Ah! what! Mrs. Woffington here?" said the diplomate.

"Sir Charles Pomander, I declare!" said the actress.

"I have just parted with an admirer of yours."

"I wish I could part with them all," was the reply.

"A pastoral youth, who means to win La Woffing-

ton by agricultural courtship,—as shepherds woo in sylvan shades."

"With oaten pipe the rustic maids,"

quoth the Woffington, improvising.

The diplomate laughed, the actress laughed, and said, laughingly: "*Tell me what he says, word for word.*"

"It will only make you laugh."

"Well, and am I never to laugh, who provide so many laughs for you all?"

"*C'est juste.* You shall share the general merriment. Imagine a romantic soul, who adores you for *your simplicity.*"

"My simplicity! am I so very simple?"

"No," said Sir Charles, monstrous drily. "He says you are out of place on the stage, and wants to take the star from its firmament, and put it in a cottage."

"I am not a star," replied the Woffington, "I am only a meteor. And what does the man think I am to do without this (here she imitated applause) from my dear public's thousand hands?"

"You are to have this (he mimicked a kiss) from a single mouth, instead."

"He is mad! Tell me what more he says. Oh! don't stop to invent,—I should detect you, and you would only spoil this man."

He laughed conceitedly. "I should spoil him! Well, then, he proposes to be your friend rather than your lover, and keep you from being talked of,—he! he!—instead of adding to your *éclat.*"

"And if he is your friend, why don't you tell him my real character, and send him into the country?"

She said this rapidly and with an appearance of earnest. The diplomatist fell into the trap.

"I do," said he; "but he snaps his fingers at me and

common-sense and the world. I really think there is only one way to get rid of him, and with him of every annoyance."

"Ah! that would be nice."

"Delicious! I had the honour, Madam, of laying certain proposals at your feet."

"Oh, yes—your letter, Sir Charles. I have only just had time to run my eye down it. Let us examine it together."

She took out the letter with a wonderful appearance of interest, and the diplomate allowed himself to fall into the absurd position to which she invited him. They put their two heads together over the letter.

"'A coach, a country-house, pin-money'—and I'm so tired of houses and coaches and pins. Oh yes, here's something; what is this you offer me, up in this corner?"

Sir Charles inspected the place carefully, and announced that it was "his heart."

"And he can't even write it!" said she. "That word is 'earth.' Ah! well, you know best. There is your letter, Sir Charles."

She curtsied, returned him the letter, and resumed her study of Lothario.

"Favour me with your answer, Madam," said her suitor.

"You have it," was the reply.

"Madam, I don't understand your answer," said Sir Charles, stiffly.

"I can't find you answers and understandings too," was the lady-like reply. "You must beat my answer into your understanding whilst I beat this man's verse into mine.

"'And like the birds, &c.'"

Pomander recovered himself a little; he laughed with

quiet insolence. "Tell me," said he, "do you really refuse?"

"My good soul," said Mrs. Woffington, "why this surprise? Are you so ignorant of the stage and the world as not to know that I refuse such offers as yours every week of my life?"

"I know better," was the cool reply. She left it unnoticed.

"I have so many of these," continued she, "that I have begun to forget they are insults."

At this word the button broke off Sir Charles's foil.

"Insults, Madam! They are the highest compliments you have left it in our power to pay you."

The other took the button off her foil.

"Indeed!" cried she, with well-feigned surprise. "Oh! I understand. To be your mistress could be but a temporary disgrace; to be your wife would be a lasting discredit," she continued. "And now, Sir, having played your rival's game, and showed me your whole hand (a light broke in upon our diplomate), do something to recover the reputation of a man of the world. A gentleman is somewhere about in whom you have interested me by your tame satire; pray tell him I am in the green-room, with no better companion than his bad poet."

Sir Charles clenched his teeth.

"I accept the delicate commission," replied he, "that you may see how easily a man of the world drops what the rustic is eager to pick up."

"That is better," said the actress, with a provoking appearance of good humour. "You have a woman's tongue, if not her wit; but, my good soul," added she, with cool *hauteur*, "remember you have something to do of more importance than anything you can say."

"I accept your courteous dismissal, Madam," said

Pomander, grinding his teeth. "I will send a carpenter for your swain; and I leave you."

He bowed to the ground.

"Thanks for the double favour, good Sir Charles."

She curtsied to the floor.

Feminine vengeance! He had come between her and her love. All very clear, Mrs. Actress; but was it wise?

"I am revenged!" thought Mrs. Woffington, with a little feminine smirk.

"I will be revenged!" vowed Pomander, clenching his teeth.

CHAPTER VII

COMPARE a November day with a May day. They are not more unlike than a beautiful woman in company with a man she is indifferent to or averse, and the same woman with the man of her heart by her side.

At sight of Mr. Vane all her coldness and *nonchalance* gave way to a gentle complacency; and when she spoke to him her voice, so clear and cutting in the late *assaut d'armes,* sank of its own accord into the most tender, delicious tone imaginable.

Mr. Vane and she made love. He pleased her, and she desired to please him. My reader knows her wit, her *finesse,* her fluency; but he cannot conceive how god-like was her way of making love. I can put a few of the corpses of her words upon paper; but where are the heavenly tones,—now calm and convincing, now soft and melancholy, now thrilling with tenderness, now glowing with the fiery eloquence of passion? She told him that she knew the map of his face; that for some days past he had been subject to an influence adverse to her. She begged him, calmly, for his own sake, to distrust false friends, and judge her by his own heart, eyes, and judgment. He promised her he would.

"And I do trust you, in spite of them all," said he; "for your face is the shrine of sincerity and candour. I alone know you."

Then she prayed him to observe the heartlessness of his sex, and to say whether she had done ill to hide the riches of her heart from the cold and shallow, and to keep them all for one honest man, "who will be my friend, I hope," said she, "as well as my lover."

"Ah!" said Vane, "that is my ambition."

"We actresses," said she, "make good the old proverb, 'Many lovers, but few friends.' And oh! 't is we who need a friend. Will you be mine?"

Whilst he lived, he would.

In turn, he begged her to be generous, and tell him the way for him, Ernest Vane, inferior in wit and address to many of her admirers, to win her heart from them all.

This singular woman's answer is, I think, worth attention.

"Never act in my presence; never try to be eloquent or clever; never force a sentiment or turn a phrase. Remember, I am the goddess of tricks. Do not descend to competition with me and the Pomanders of the world. At all littlenesses, you will ever be awkward in my eyes. And I am a woman. I must have a superior to love—lie open to my eye. Light itself is not more beautiful than the upright man, whose bosom is open to the day. Oh, yes! fear not you will be my superior, dear; for in me honesty has to struggle against the habits of my art and life. Be simple and sincere, and I shall love you, and bless the hour you shone upon my cold, artificial life. Ah, Ernest!" said she, fixing on his eyes her own, the fire of which melted into tenderness as she spoke, "be my friend. Come between me and the temptations of an unprotected life,—the recklessness of a vacant heart."

He threw himself at her feet. He called her an angel. He told her he was unworthy of her, but that he would try and deserve her. Then he hesitated, and trembling, he said:—

"I will be frank and loyal. Had I not better tell you everything? You will not hate me for a confession I make myself?"

"I shall like you better—oh! so much better!"

"Then I will own to you——"

"Oh! do not tell me you have ever loved before me! I could not bear to hear it!" cried this inconsistent personage.

The other weak creature needed no more.

"I see plainly I never loved but you," said he.

"Let me hear that only!" cried she; "I am jealous even of the past. Say you never loved but me—never mind whether it is true. My child, you do not even yet know love. Ernest, shall I make you love, as none of your sex ever loved,—with heart, and brain, and breath, and life, and soul?

With these rapturous words she poured the soul of love into his eyes; he forgot everything in the world but her; he dissolved in present happiness, and vowed himself hers for ever. And she, for her part, bade him but retain her esteem, and no woman ever went farther in love than she would. She was a true epicure; she had learned that passion, vulgar in itself, is godlike when based upon esteem.

This tender scene was interrupted by the call-boy, who brought Mrs. Woffington a note from the manager, informing her there would be no rehearsal. This left her at liberty, and she proceeded to take a somewhat abrupt leave of Mr. Vane. He was endeavouring to persuade her to let him be her companion until dinner-time (she was to be his guest), when Pomander entered the room.

Mrs. Woffington, however, was not to be persuaded; she excused herself on the score of a duty which she said she had to perform, and whispering as she passed Pomander, 'Keep your own counsel," she went out rather precipitately.

Vane looked slightly disappointed.

Sir Charles, who had returned to see whether (as he fully expected) she had told Vane everything,—and

who, at that moment, perhaps, would not have been sorry had Mrs. Woffington's lover called him to serious account,—finding it was not her intention to make mischief, and not choosing to publish his own defeat, dropped quietly into his old line, and determined to keep the lovers in sight, and play for revenge. He smiled and said: "My good Sir, nobody can hope to monopolize Mrs. Woffington; she has others to do justice to besides you."

To his surprise, Mr. Vane turned instantly round upon him, and looking him haughtily in the face, said: "Sir Charles Pomander, the settled malignity with which you pursue that lady is unmanly and offensive to me, who love her. Let our acquaintance cease here, if you please, or let her be sacred from your venomous tongue."

Sir Charles bowed stiffly and replied that it was only due to himself to withdraw a protection so little appreciated.

The two friends were in the very act of separating for ever, when who should run in but Pompey, the renegade. He darted up to Sir Charles, and said: "Massa Pomannah, she in a coach, going to 10 Hercules Buildings. I'm in a hurry, Massa Pomannah."

"Where?" cried Pomander. "Say that again."

"10 Hercules Buildings, Lambeth. Me in a hurry, Massa Pomannah."

"Faithful child, there's a guinea for thee. Fly!"

The slave flew, and taking a short cut, caught and fastened on to the slow vehicle in the Strand.

"It is a house of rendezvous," said Sir Charles, half to himself, half to Mr. Vane. He repeated, in triumph: "It is a house of rendezvous." He then, recovering his *sang-froid*, and treating it all as a matter of course, explained that at 10 Hercules Buildings was a fashionable shop, with entrances from two streets; that the best Indian scarfs and shawls were sold there, and that

ladies kept their carriages waiting an immense time in the principal street, whilst they were supposed to be in the shop, or the showroom. He then went on to say that he had only this morning heard that the intimacy between Mrs. Woffington and a Colonel Murthwaite, although publicly broken off for prudential reasons, was still clandestinely carried on. She had, doubtless, slipped away to meet the Colonel.

Mr. Vane turned pale.

"No! I will not suspect. I will not dog her like a bloodhound," cried he.

"I will!" said Pomander.

"You!—by what right?"

"The right of curiosity. I will know whether it is you who are imposed on; or whether you are right, and all the world is deceived in this woman."

He ran out; but for all his speed, when he got into the street, there was the jealous lover at his elbow. They darted with all speed into the Strand; got a coach. Sir Charles, on the box, gave Jehu a guinea, and took the reins, and by a Niagara of whip-cord they attained Lambeth; and at length, to his delight, Pomander saw another coach before him with a gold-laced black slave behind it. The coach stopped; and the slave came to the door. The shop in question was a few hundred yards distant. The adroit Sir Charles not only stopped, but turned his coach, and let the horses crawl back towards London; he also flogged the side panels to draw the attention of Mr. Vane. That gentleman looked through the little circular window at the back of the vehicle, and saw a lady paying the coachman. There was no mistaking her figure. This lady, then, followed at a distance by her slave, walked on towards Hercules Buildings; and it was his miserable fate to see her look uneasily round, and

at last glide in at a side door, close to the silk-mercer's shop.

The carriage stopped. Sir Charles came himself to the door.

"Now, Vane," said he; "before I consent to go any further in this business, you must promise me to be cool and reasonable. I abhor absurdity; and there must be no swords drawn for this little hypocrite."

"I submit to no dictation," said Vane, white as a sheet.

"You have benefited so far by my knowledge," said the other, politely; "let me, who am self-possessed, claim some influence with you."

"Forgive me!" said poor Vane. "My ang—my sorrow that such an angel should be a monster of deceit—" He could say no more.

They walked to the shop.

"How she peeped, this way, and that," said Pomander; "sly little Woffy!

"No! on second thoughts," said he, "it is the other street we must reconnoitre; and if we don't see her there, we will enter the shop, and by dint of this purse, we shall soon untie the knot of the Woffington riddle."

Vane leaned heavily on his tormentor.

"I am faint," said he.

"Lean on me, my dear friend," said Sir Charles. "Your weakness will leave you in the next street."

In the next street they discovered—nothing. In the shop, they found—no Mrs. Woffington. They returned to the principal street. Vane began to hope there was no positive evidence. Suddenly, three stories up, a fiddle was heard. Pomander took no notice, but Vane turned red; this put Sir Charles upon the scent.

"Stay!" said he. "Is not that an Irish tune?"

Vane groaned. He covered his face with his hands, and hissed out:—

"It is her favourite tune."

"Aha!" said Pomander. "Follow me!"

They crept up the stairs, Pomander in advance, they heard the signs of an Irish orgie—a rattling jig played, and danced with the inspiriting interjections of that frolicsome nation. These sounds ceased after a while, and Pomander laid his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"I prepare you," said he, "for what you are sure to see. This woman was an Irish bricklayer's daughter, and 'what is bred in the bone never comes out of the flesh;' you will find her sitting on some Irishman's knee, whose limbs are ever so much stouter than yours. You are the man of her head, and this is the man of her heart. These things would be monstrous, if they were not common; incredible, if we did not see them every day. But this poor fellow, whom probably she deceives as well as you, is not to be sacrificed like a dog to your unjust wrath; he is as superior to her as you are to him."

"I will commit no violence," said Vane. "I still hope she is innocent."

Pomander smiled, and said he hoped so too.

"And if she is what you think, I will but show her she is known, and blaming myself as much as her,—oh, yes! more than her!—I will go down this night to Shropshire, and never speak word to her again in this world or the next."

"Good," said Sir Charles.

" 'Le bruit est pour le fat, la plainte est pour le sot,
L'honnête homme trompé s'éloigne et ne dit mot.'

"Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Then follow me."

Turning the handle gently, he opened the door like

lightning, and was in the room. Vane's head peered over his shoulder. She was actually there!

For once in her life the cautious, artful woman was taken by surprise. She gave a little scream, and turned as red as fire. But Sir Charles surprised somebody else even more than he did poor Mrs. Woffington.

It would be impertinent to tantalise my reader; but I flatter myself this history is not written with power enough to do that, and I may venture to leave him to guess whom Sir Charles Pomander surprised more than he did the actress, while I go back for the lagging sheep.

CHAPTER VIII

JAMES TRIPLET, water in his eye, but fire in his heart, went home on wings. Arrived there, he anticipated curiosity by informing all hands he should answer no questions. Only, in the intervals of a work which was to take the family out of all its troubles, he should gradually unfold a tale verging on the marvellous,—a tale whose only fault was that fiction, by which alone the family could hope to be great, paled beside it. He then seized some sheets of paper, fished out some old dramatic sketches, and a list of *dramatis personæ* prepared years ago, and plunged into a comedy. As he wrote, true to his promise, he painted, Triplet-wise, that story which we have coldly related, and made it appear to all but Mrs. Triplet that he was under the tutela, or express protection of Mrs. Woffington, who would push his fortunes until the only difficulty would be to keep arrogance out of the family heart.

Mrs. Triplet groaned aloud. "You have brought the picture home, I see," said she.

"Of course I have. She is going to give me a sitting."

"At what hour of what day?" said Mrs. Triplet, with a world of meaning.

"She did not say," replied Triplet, avoiding his wife's eye.

"I know she did not," was the answer. "I would rather you had brought me the ten shillings than this fine story," said she.

"Wife," said Triplet, "don't put me into a frame

of mind in which successful comedies are not written." He scribbled away; but his wife's despondency told upon the man of disappointments. Then he stuck fast; then he became fidgetty.

"Do keep those children quiet!" said the father.

"Hush, my dears," said the mother; "let your father write. Comedy seems to give you more trouble than tragedy, James," added she, soothingly.

"Yes," was his answer. "Sorrow comes somehow more natural to me; but for all that I have got a bright thought, Mrs. Triplet. Listen, all of you. You see, Jane, they are all at a sumptuous banquet, all the *dramatis personæ*, except the poet."

Triplet went on writing, and reading his work out; music, sparkling wine, massive plate, rose-water in the hand-glasses, soup, fish,—shall I have three sorts of fish? I will; they are cheap in this market. Ah! Fortune, you wretch, here at least I am your master, and I'll make you know it—venison," wrote Triplet, with a malicious grin, "game, pickles, and provocatives in the centre of the table, then up jumps one of the guests, and says he—"

"Oh dear, I am so hungry."

This was not from the comedy, but from one of the boys.

"And so am I," cried a girl.

"That is an absurd remark, Lysimachus," said Triplet, with a suspicious calmness. "How can a boy be hungry three hours after breakfast?"

"But father, there was no breakfast for breakfast."

"Now I ask you, Mrs. Triplet," appealed the author, "how am I to write comic scenes if you let Lysimachus and Roxalana here put the heavy business in every five minutes?"

"Forgive them; the poor things are hungry."

"Then let them be hungry in another room," said

the irritated scribe. "They sha'n't cling round my pen, and paralyze it just when it is going to make all our fortunes. But you women," snapped Triplet the Just, "have no consideration for people's feelings. Send them all to bed, every man jack of them!"

Finding the conversation taking this turn, the brats raised an unanimous howl.

Triplet darted a fierce glance at them. "Hungry, hungry!" cried he; "is that a proper expression to use before a father who is sitting down here all gaiety (scratching wildly with his pen) and hilarity (scratch), to write a com-com—" he choked a moment; then in a very different voice, all sadness and tenderness, he said: "Where's the youngest? where's Lucy? As if I did n't know you are hungry!"

Lucy came to him directly. He took her on his knee, pressed her gently to his side, and wrote silently. The others were still.

"Father," said Lucy, aged five, the germ of a woman, "I am not tho very hungry."

"And I am not hungry at all," said bluff Lysimachus, taking his sister's cue; then going upon his own tact he added, "I had a great piece of bread and butter yesterday!"

"Wife, they will drive me mad!" and he dashed at the paper.

The second boy explained to his mother, *sotto voce:* "Mother, he *made* us hungry out of this book."

"It is a beautiful book," said Lucy. "Is it a cookery book?"

Triplet roared, "Do you hear that?" inquired he, all trace of ill-humour gone. "Wife," he resumed, after a gallant scribble, "I took that sermon I wrote."

And beautiful it was, James. I'm sure it quite cheered me up with thinking that we shall all be dead before so very long."

"Well, the reverend gentleman would not have it. He said it was too hard upon sin. 'You run at the devil like a mad bull,' said he. 'Sell it in Lambeth, Sir; *here* calmness and decency are before everything,' says he. 'My congregation expect to go to Heaven down-hill. Perhaps the chaplain of Newgate might give you a crown for it,' said he;" and Triplet dashed viciously at the paper. "Ah!" sighed he, "if my friend Mrs. Woffington would but drop these stupid comedies and take to tragedy, this house would soon be all smiles."

"Oh, James!" replied Mrs. Triplet, almost peevishly, "how can you expect anything but fine words from that woman? You won't believe what all the world says. You will trust to your own good heart."

"I have n't a good heart," said the poor, honest fellow. "I spoke like a brute to you just now."

"Never mind, James," said the woman; "I wonder how you put up with me at all,—a sick, useless creature. I often wish to die, for your sake. I know you would do better. I am such a weight round your neck."

The man made no answer, but he put Lucy gently down, and went to the woman, and took her forehead to his bosom, and held it there; and after a while, returned with silent energy to his comedy.

"Play us a tune on the fiddle, father."

"Ay, do, husband. That helps you often in your writing."

Lysimachus brought him the fiddle, and Triplet essayed a merry tune; but it came out so doleful that he shook his head, and laid the instrument down. Music must be in the heart, or it will come out of the fingers—notes, not music.

"No," said he; "let us be serious and finish this comedy slap off. Perhaps it hitches because I forgot

to invoke the comic muse. She must be a black-hearted jade, if she doesn't come with merry notions to a poor devil, starving in the midst of his hungry little ones."

"We are past help from heathen goddesses," said the woman. "We must pray to Heaven to look down upon us and our children."

The man looked up with a very bad expression on his countenance.

"You forget," said he, sullenly; "our street is very narrow, and the opposite houses are very high."

"James!"

"How can Heaven be expected to see what honest folk endure in so dark a hole as this?" cried the man, fiercely.

"James," said the woman, with fear and sorrow, "what words are these?"

The man rose, and flung his pen upon the floor.

"Have we given honesty a fair trial,—yes or no?"

"No!" said the woman, without a moment's hesitation; "not till we die as we have lived. Heaven is higher than the sky. Children," said she, lest perchance her husband's words should have harmed their young souls, "the sky is above the earth, and Heaven is higher than the sky; and Heaven is just."

"I suppose it is so," said the man, a little cowed by her. "Everybody says so. I think so, at bottom, myself; but I can't see it. I want to see it, but I can't!" cried he, fiercely. "Have my children offended Heaven? They will starve,—they will die! If I was Heaven, I'd be just, and send an angel to take these children's part. They cried to me for bread; I had no bread, so I gave them hard words. The moment I had done that I knew it was all over. God knows, it took a long while to break my heart; but it is broken at last,—quite, quite broken! broken! broken!"

And the poor thing laid his head upon the table, and sobbed, beyond all power of restraint. The children cried round him, scarce knowing why; and Mrs. Triplet could only say, "My poor husband!" and prayed and wept upon the couch where she lay.

It was at this juncture that a lady, who had knocked gently and unheard, opened the door, and with a light step entered the apartment; but no sooner had she caught sight of Triplet's anguish than, saying hastily, "Stay, I forgot something," she made as hasty an exit.

This gave Triplet a moment to recover himself; and Mrs. Woffington, whose lynx-eye had comprehended all at a glance, and who had determined at once what line to take, came flying in again, saying:—

"Was n't somebody inquiring for an angel? Here I am. See, Mr. Triplet;" and she showed him a note, which said, "Madam, you are an angel." "From a perfect stranger," explained she; "so it must be true.

"Mrs. Woffington," said Mr. Triplet to his wife.

Mrs. Woffington planted herself in the middle of the floor, and with a comical glance, setting her arms akimbo, uttered a shrill whistle.

"Now you will see another angel; there are two sorts of them."

Pompey came in with a basket; she took it from him.

"Lucifer, avaunt!" cried she, in a terrible tone, that drove him to the wall; "and wait outside the door," added she, conversationally.

"I heard you were ill, Ma'am, and I have brought you some physic,—black draughts from Burgundy;" and she smiled. And recovered from their first surprise, young and old began to thaw beneath that witching, irresistible smile. "Mrs. Triplet, I have come to give your husband a sitting; will you allow me to eat my little luncheon with you? I am so

hungry." Then she clapped her hands, and in ran Pompey. She sent him for a pie she professed to have fallen in love with at the corner of the street.

"Mother," said Alcibiades, "will the lady give me a bit of her pie?"

"Hush! you rude boy!" cried the mother.

"She is not much of a lady if she does not," cried Mrs. Woffington. "Now, children, first let us look at —ahem—a comedy. Nineteen *dramatis personæ!* What do you say, children,—shall we cut out seven, or nine? that is the question. You can't bring your armies into our drawing-rooms, Mr. Dagger-and-bowl. Are you the Marlborough of comedy? Can you marshal battalions on a turkey carpet, and make gentle-folks witty in platoons? What is this in the first act? A duel, and both wounded! You butcher!"

"They are not to die, Ma'am!" cried Triplet, deprecatingly; "upon my honour," said he, solemnly, spreading his hands on his bosom.

"Do you think I'll trust their lives with you? No! Give me a pen: this is the way *we* run people through the body. Then she wrote ("business. Araminta looks out of the garret window. Combatants drop their swords, put their hands to their hearts, and stagger off O. P. and P. S.") "Now, children, who helps me lay the cloth?"

"I!"

"And I!" The children run to the cupboard.

Mrs. Triplet (half rising).—"Madam, I—can't think of allowing you."

Mrs. Woffington replied: "Sit down, Madam, or I must use brute force. If you are ill, be ill—till I make you well. Twelve plates, quick! twenty-four knives quicker! Forty-eight forks quickest!" She met the children with the cloth and laid it; then she met them again and laid knives and forks, all at full gallop, which

mightily excited the bairns. Pompey came in with the pie, Mrs. Woffington took it and set it before Triplet.

Mrs. Woffington.—"Your coat, Mr. Triplet, if you please."

Mr. Triplet.—"My coat, Madam?"

Mrs. Woffington.—"Yes, off with it—there's a hole in it—and carve." Then she whipped to the other end of the table and stitched like wildfire. "Be pleased to cast your eyes on that, Mrs. Triplet. Pass it to the lady, young gentleman. Fire away, Mr. Triplet; never mind us women. Woffington's housewife, Ma'am, fearful to the eye, only it holds everything in the world, and there is a small space for everything else—to be returned by the bearer. Thank you, Sir." (Stitches away like lightning at the coat.) "Eat away, children; now is your time. When once I begin, the pie will soon end; I do everything so quick."

Roxalana.—"The lady sews quicker than you, mother."

Woffington.—"Bless the child; don't come so near my sword-arm; the needle will go into your eye, and out at the back of your head."

This nonsense made the children giggle.

"The needle will be lost—the child no more—enter undertaker—house turned topsy-turvy—father shows Woffington to the door—off she goes with a face as long and dismal as some people's comedies—no names—crying, "Fine cha-ney oran-ges!' "

The children, all but Lucy, screeched with laughter.

Lucy said, gravely:—

"Mother, the lady is very funny."

"You will be as funny when you are as well paid for it."

This just hit poor Trip's notion of humour; and he began to choke, with his mouth full of pie.

"James, take care," said Mrs. Triplet, sad and solemn.

James looked up.

"My wife is a good woman, Madam," said he; "but deficient in an important particular."

"Oh, James!"

"Yes, my dear. I regret to say you have no sense of humour; nummore than a cat, Jane."

"What! because the poor thing can't laugh at your comedy?"

"No, Ma'am; but she laughs at nothing."

"Try her with one of your tragedies, my lad."

"I am sure, James," said the poor, good, lack-adaisical woman, "if I don't laugh it is not for want of the will. I used to be a very hearty laugher," whined she; "but I have n't laughed this two years."

"Oh, indeed!" said the Woffington. "Then the next two years you shall do nothing else."

"Ah, Madam," said Triplet, "that passes the art, even of the great comedian."

"Does it?" said the actress, coolly.

Lucy.—"She is not a comedy lady. You don't ever cry, pretty lady?"

Woffington (ironically).—"Oh, of course not."

Lucy (confidentially).—"Comedy is crying. Father cried all the time he was writing his one."

Triplet turned red as fire.

"Hold your tongue," said he; "I was bursting with merriment. Wife, our children talk too much; they put their noses into everything, and criticise their own father."

"Unnatural offspring!" laughed the visitor.

"And when they take up a notion, Socrates could n't convince them to the contrary. For instance, Madam, all this morning they thought fit to assume that they were starving."

"So we were," said Lysimachus, "until the angel came; and the devil went for the pie."

"There—there—there! Now you mark my words; we shall never get that idea out of their heads——"

"Until," said Mrs. Woffington, lumping a huge cut of pie into Roxalana's plate, "we put a very different idea into their stomachs." This and the look she cast on Mrs. Triplet, fairly caught that good, though sombre personage. She giggled, put her hand to her face, and said, "I'm sure I ask your pardon, Ma'am."

It was no use; the comedian had determined they should all laugh, and they were made to laugh. Then she rose, and showed them how to drink healths *à la Française;* and keen were her little admirers to touch her glass with theirs. And the pure wine she had brought did Mrs. Triplet much good, too; though not so much as the music and sunshine of her face and voice. Then, when their stomachs were full of good food, and the soul of the grape tingled in their veins, and their souls glowed under her great magnetic power, she suddenly seized the fiddle, and showed them another of her enchantments. She put it on her knee, and played a tune that would have made gout, colic, and phthisick dance upon their last legs. She played to the eye as well as to the ear, with such a smart gesture of the bow, and such a radiance of face as she looked at them, that whether the music came out of her wooden shell, or her horsehair wand, or her bright self, seemed doubtful. They pranced on their chairs; they could not keep still. She jumped up—so did they. She gave a wild Irish horroo. She put the fiddle in Triplet's hand.

"The Wind that Shakes the Barley, ye divil!" cried she.

Triplet went *hors de lui;* he played like Paganini, or an intoxicated demon. Woffington covered the

buckle in gallant style; she danced, the children danced. Triplet fiddled and danced, and flung his limbs in wild dislocation; the wineglasses danced; and last, Mrs. Triplet was observed to be bobbing about on her sofa, in a monstrous absurd way, droning out the tune, and playing her hands with mild enjoyment, all to herself. Woffington pointed out this pantomimic soliloquy to the two boys, with a glance full of fiery meaning. This was enough: with a fiendish yell, they fell upon her, and tore her, shrieking, off the sofa. And lo! when she was once launched, she danced up to her husband, and set to him with a meek deliberation, that was as funny as any part of the scene. So then the mover of all this slipped on one side, and let the stone of merriment roll—and roll it did; there was no swimming, sprawling, or irrelevant frisking; their feet struck the ground for every note of the fiddle, pat as its echo, their faces shone, their hearts leaped, and their poor frozen natures came out, and warmed themselves at the glowing melody; a great sunbeam had come into their abode, and these human motes danced in it. The elder ones recovered their gravity first; they sat down breathless, and put their hands to their hearts; they looked at one another, and then at the goddess who had revived them. Their first feeling was wonder; were they the same, who, ten minutes ago, were weeping together! Yes! ten minutes ago they were rayless, joyless, hopeless. No, the sun was in their hearts, and sorrow and sighing were fled, as fogs disperse before the God of day. It was magical; could a mortal play upon the soul of man, woman, and child like this? Happy Woffington! and suppose this was more than half acting, but such acting as Triplet never dreamed of; and to tell the honest simple truth, I, myself, should not have suspected it; but children are sharper than one would

think, and Alcibiades Triplet told, in after years, that when they were all dancing, except the lady, he caught sight of her face, and it was quite, quite grave, and even sad; but as often as she saw him look at her, she smiled at him so gaily he could n't believe it was the same face.

If it was art, glory be to such art so worthily applied! and honour to such creatures as this, that come like sunshine into poor men's houses, and tune drooping hearts to daylight and hope!

The wonder of these worthy people soon changed to gratitude. Mrs. Woffington stopped their mouths at once.

"No, no!" cried she; "if you really love me, no scenes: I hate them. Tell these brats to kiss me, and let me go. I must sit for my picture after dinner; it is a long way to Bloomsbury Square."

The children needed no bidding; they clustered round her, and poured out their innocent hearts as children only do.

"I shall pray for you after father and mother," said one.

"I shall pray for you after daily bread," said Lucy, "because we were *tho* hungry till you came!"

"My poor children!" cried Woffington, and hard to grown-up actors, as she called us, but sensitive to children, she fairly melted as she embraced them. It was at this precise juncture that the door was unceremoniously opened, and the two gentlemen burst upon the scene!

My reader now guesses whom Sir Charles Pomander surprised more than he did Mrs. Woffington. He could not for the life of him comprehend what she was doing, and what was her ulterior object. The *nil admirari* of the fine gentleman deserted him, and he gazed open-mouthed, like the veriest chaw-bacon.

The actress, unable to extricate herself in a moment from the children, stood there like Charity in New College Chapel, whilst the mother kissed her hand, and the father quietly dropped tears, like some leaden water-god in the middle of a fountain.

Vane turned hot and cold by turns, with joy and shame. Pomander's genius came to the aid of their embarrassment.

"Follow my lead," whispered he. "What! Mrs. Woffington here!" cried he; then he advanced business-like to Triplet. "We are aware, Sir, of your various talents, and are come to make a demand on them. I, Sir, am the unfortunate possessor of frescos; time has impaired their indelicacy,—no man can restore it as you can."

"Augh! Sir! Sir!" said the gratified goose.

"My Cupid's bows are walking-sticks, and my Venus's noses are snubbed. You must set all that straight, on your own terms, Mr. Triplet."

"In a single morning all shall bloom again, Sir! Whom would you wish them to resemble in feature? I have lately been praised for my skill in portraiture" (glancing at Mrs. Woffington).

"Oh!" said Pomander, carelessly, "you need not go far for Venuses and Cupids, I suppose?"

"I see, Sir,—my wife and children. Thank you Sir; thank you."

Pomander stared; Mrs. Woffington laughed.

Now it was Vane's turn.

"Let me have a copy of verses from your pen. I shall have five pounds at your disposal for them."

"The world has found me out!" thought Triplet, blinded by his vanity. "The subject, Sir?"

"No matter," said Vane; "no matter."

"Oh! of course, it does not matter to me!" said Triplet, with some *hauteur,* and assuming poetic omnip-

otence. "Only, when one knows the subject, one can sometimes make the verses apply better."

"Write, then, since you are so confident, upon Mrs. Woffington."

"Ah! that is a subject! They shall be ready in an hour!" cried Trip, in whose imagination Parnassus was a raised counter. He had in a tea-cup some lines on Venus and Mars, which he could not but feel would fit Thalia and Crœsus, or Genius and Envy, equally well. "In one hour, Sir," said Triplet, "the article shall be executed, and delivered at your house."

Mrs. Woffington called Vane to her, with an engaging smile. A month ago, he would have hoped she would not have penetrated him and Sir Charles; but he knew her better now. He came trembling.

"Look me in the face, Mr. Vane," said she, gently, but firmly.

"I cannot!" said he. "How can I ever look you in the face again?"

"Ah! you disarm me! But I must strike you, or this will never end. Did I not promise that when you had earned my esteem, I would tell you—what no mortal knows, Ernest—my whole story? I delay the confession; it will cost me so many blushes—so many tears! And yet I hope, if you knew all, you would pity and forgive me. Meantime, did I ever tell you a falsehood?"

"Oh, no!"

"Why doubt me, then, when I tell you that I hold all your sex cheap but you? Why suspect me of—Heaven knows what, at the dictation of a heartless, brainless fop,—on the word of a known liar, like the world?"

Black lightning flashed from her glorious eyes as she administered this royal rebuke. Vane felt what a poor creature he was, and his face showed such burn-

ing shame and contrition that he obtained his pardon without speaking.

"There," said she, kindly, "do not let us torment one another. I forgive you. Let me make you happy, Ernest. Is that a great favour to ask? I can make you happier than your brightest dream of happiness, if you will let yourself be happy."

They rejoined the others; but Vane turned his back on Pomander, and would not look at him.

"Sir Charles," said Mrs. Woffington, gaily; for she scorned to admit the fine gentleman to the rank of a permanent enemy, "you will be of our party, I trust, at dinner?"

"Why, no, Madam; I fear I cannot give myself that pleasure to-day." Sir Charles did not choose to swell the triumph. "Mr. Vane, good day!" said he, rather drily. "Mr. Triplet—Madam—your most obedient!" and self-possessed at top, but at bottom crest-fallen, he bowed himself away.

Sir Charles, however, on descending the stair and gaining the street, caught site of a horseman riding uncertainly about, and making his horse curvet to attract attention.

He soon recognized one of his own horses and upon it the servant he had left behind to dog that poor innocent country lady. The servant sprang off his horse and touched his hat. He informed his master that he had kept with the carriage until ten o'clock this morning, when he had ridden away from it at Barnet, having duly pumped the servants as opportunity offered.

"Who is she?" cried Sir Charles.

"Wife of a Cheshire squire, Sir Charles," was the reply.

"His name? Whither goes she in town?"

"Her name is Mrs. Vane, Sir Charles. She is going to her husband.

"Curious!" cried Sir Charles. "I wish she had no husband. No! I wish she came from Shropshire;" and he chuckled at the notion.

"If you please, Sir Charles," said the man, "is not Willoughby in Cheshire?"

"No," cried his master; "it is in Shropshire. What! eh! Five guineas for you if that lady comes from Willoughby in Shropshire."

"That is where she comes from, then, Sir Charles, and she is going to Bloomsbury Square."

"How long have they been married?"

"Not more than twelve months, Sir Charles."

Pomander gave the man ten guineas instead of five on the spot.

Reader, it was too true! Mr. Vane—the good, the decent, the church-goer—Mr. Vane, whom Mrs. Woffington had selected to improve her morals—Mr. Vane was a married man!

CHAPTER IX.

AS soon as Pomander had drawn his breath and realized this discovery he darted upstairs, and with all the demure calmness he could assume, told Mr. Vane, whom he met descending, that he was happy to find his engagements permitted him to join the party in Bloomsbury Square. He then flung himself upon his servant's horse.

Like Iago, he saw the indistinct outline of a glorious and a most malicious plot; it lay crude in his head and heart at present. This much he saw clearly,—that if he could time Mrs. Vane's arrival so that she should pounce upon the Woffington at her husband's table, he might be present at and enjoy the public discomfiture of a man and woman who had wounded his vanity. Bidding his servant make the best of his way to Bloomsbury Square, Sir Charles galloped in that direction himself, intending first to inquire whether Mrs. Vane was arrived, and if not, to ride towards Islington and meet her. His plan was frustrated by an accident; galloping round a corner, his horse did not change his leg cleverly, and the pavement being also loose, slipped and fell on his side, throwing his rider upon the *trottoir*. The horse got up and trembled violently, but was unhurt. The rider lay motionless, except that his legs quivered on the pavement. They took him up and conveyed him into a druggist's shop, the master of which practised chirurgery. He had to be sent for; and before he could be found Sir Charles recovered his reason,—so much so that when the chirurgeon approached with his fleam to bleed him, according to the practice of the day, the pa-

tient drew his sword, and assured the other he would let out every drop of blood in his body if he touched him.

He of the shorter but more lethal weapon hastily retreated. Sir Charles flung a guinea on the counter, and mounting his horse rode him off rather faster than before this accident.

There was a dead silence!

"I believe that gentleman to be the devil!" said a thoughtful bystander. The crowd (it was a century ago) assented, *nem. con.*

Sir Charles, arrived in Bloomsbury Square, found that the whole party was assembled. He therefore ordered his servant to parade before the door, and if he saw Mrs. Vane's carriage enter the square, to let him know, if possible, before she should reach the house. On entering he learned that Mr. Vane and his guests were in the garden (a very fine one), and joined them there.

Mrs. Vane demands another chapter, in which I will tell the reader who she was, and what excuse her husband had for his *liaison* with Margaret Woffington.

CHAPTER X

MABEL CHESTER was the beauty and toast of South Shropshire. She had refused the hand of half the country squires in a circle of some dozen miles, till at last Mr. Vane became her suitor. Besides a handsome face and person, Mr. Vane had accomplishments his rivals did not possess. He ready poetry to her on mossy banks, an hour before sunset, and awakened sensibilities which her other suitors shocked, and they them.

The lovely Mabel had a taste for beautiful things, without any excess of that severe quality called judgment.

I will explain. If you or I, reader, had read to her in the afternoon, amidst the smell of roses and eglantine, the chirp of the mavis, the hum of bees, the twinkling of butterflies, and the tinkle of distant sheep, something that combined all these sights, and sounds, and smells,—say Milton musical picture of Eden, P. L. lib. 3—and after that, "Triplet on Kew," she would have instantly pronounced in favour of "Eden"; but if *we* had read her "Milton," and Mr. Vane had read her "Triplet," she would have as unhesitatingly preferred "Kew" to "Paradise."

She was a true daughter of Eve, the lady who, when an angel was telling her and her husband the truths of heaven in heaven's own music, slipped away into the kitchen, because she preferred hearing the story at second-hand, encumbered with digressions, and in mortal but marital accents.

When her mother, who guarded Mabel like a dragon, told her Mr. Vane was not rich enough, and she really

must not give him so many opportunities, Mabel cried and embraced the dragon, and said, "Oh, mother!" The dragon finding her ferocity dissolving, tried to shake her off, but the goose would cry and embrace the dragon till it melted.

By and by Mr. Vane's uncle died suddenly and left him the great Stoken Church estate, and a trunk full of Jacobuses and Queen Anne's guineas,—his own hoard and his father's; then the dragon spake comfortably and said:—

"My child, he is now the richest man in Shropshire. He will not think of you now, so steel your heart."

Then Mabel, contrary to all expectations, did not cry; but with flushing cheek pledged her life upon Ernest's love and honour. And Ernest, as soon as the funeral, etc., left him free, galloped to Mabel, to talk of our good fortune. The dragon had done him injustice; that was not his weak point. So they were married; and they were very, very happy. But one month after, the dragon died, and that was their first grief; but they bore it together.

And Vane was not like the other Shropshire squires. His idea of pleasure was something his wife could share. He still rode, walked, and sat with her, and read to her, and composed songs for her and about her, which she played and sang prettily enough, in her quiet, lady-like way, in a voice of honey dropping from the comb. Then she kept a keen eye upon him; and when she discovered what dishes he liked she superintended those herself; and observing that he never failed to eat of a certain lemon pudding the dragon had originated, she always made this pudding herself, and she never told her husband she made it.

The first seven months of their marriage was more like blue sky than brown earth; and if any one had told Mabel that her husband was a mortal, and not an angel

sent to her that her days and nights might be unmixed, uninterrupted heaven, she could hardly have realised the information.

When a vexatious litigant began to contest the will by which Mr. Vane was Lord of Stoken Church, and Mr. Vane went up to London to concert the proper means of defeating this attack, Mrs. Vane would gladly have compounded by giving the man two or three thousand acres, or the whole estate if he wouldn't take less, not to rob her of her husband for a month; but she was docile as she was amorous; so she cried (out of sight) a week, and let her darling go, with every misgiving a loving heart could have—but one; and that one, her own heart told her, was impossible.

The month rolled away,—no symptom of a return. For this, Mr. Vane was not, in fact, to blame; but towards the end of the next month business became a convenient excuse. When three months had passed Mrs. Vane became unhappy. She thought he too must feel the separation. She offered to come to him. He answered uncandidly. He urged the length, the fatigue of the journey. She was silenced; but some time later, she began to take a new view of his objections. "He is so self-denying," said she. "Dear Ernest, he longs for me; but he thinks it selfish to let me travel so far alone to see him."

Full of this idea, she yielded to her love. She made her preparations, and wrote to him that if he did not forbid her peremptorily, he must expect to see her at his breakfast-table in a very few days.

Mr. Vane concluded this was a jest, and did not answer this letter at all.

Mrs. Vane started. She travelled with all speed; but coming to a halt at ——, she wrote to her husband that she counted on being with him at four of the clock on Thursday.

This letter preceded her arrival by a few hours. It was put into his hand at the same time with a note from Mrs. Woffington, telling him she should be at a rehearsal at Covent Garden. Thinking his wife's letter would keep he threw it on one side into a sort of a tray, and after a hurried breakfast went out of his house to the theatre. He returned, as we are aware, with Mrs. Woffington; and also, at her request, with Mr. Cibber, for whom they called on their way. He had forgotten his wife's letter, and was entirely occupied with his guests.

Sir Charles Pomander joined them, and found Mr. Colander, the head domestic of the London establishment, cutting with a pair of scissors every flower Mrs. Woffington fancied,—that lady having a passion for flowers.

Colander, during his temporary absence from the interior, had appointed James Burdock to keep the house, and receive the two remaining guests, should they arrive.

This James Burdock was a faithful old country servant, who had come up with Mr. Vane, but left his heart at Willoughby. James Burdock had for some time been ruminating, and his conclusion was that his mistress, Miss Mabel (as by force of habit he called her), was not treated as she deserved.

Burdock had been imported into Mr. Vane's family by Mabel; he had carried her in his arms when she was a child; he had held her upon a donkey when she was a little girl; and when she became a woman, it was he who taught her to stand close to her horse, and give him her foot, and spring while he lifted her steadily but strongly into her saddle, and when there, it was he who had instructed her that a horse was not a machine, that galloping tires it in time, and that galloping it on the hard road hammers it to pieces. "I taught the girl," thought James within himself.

This honest, silver-haired old fellow seemed so ridiculous to Colander, the smooth, supercilious Londoner, that he deigned sometimes to converse with James in order to quiz him. This very morning they had had a conversation.

"Poor Miss Mabel! dear heart. A twelve-month married, and nigh six months of it a widow, or next door!"

"We write to her, James, and entertain her replies, which are at considerable length."

"Ay, but we don't read 'em!" said James, with an uneasy glance at the tray.

"Invariably, at our leisure; meantime we make ourselves happy amongst the wits and the syrens."

"And she do make others happy among the poor and the ailing."

"Which shows," said Colander, superciliously, "the difference of tastes."

Burdock, whose eye had never been off his mistress's handwriting, at last took it up and said: "Master Colander, do if ye please, Sir, take this into master's dressing-room; do now."

Colander looked down on the missive with dilating eye. "Not a bill, James Burdock?" said he, reproachfully.

"A bill! bless ye, no. A letter from missus."

No, the dog would not take it in to his master; and poor James, with a sigh, replaced it in the tray.

This James Burdock, then, was left in charge of the hall by Colander, and it so happened that the change was hardly effected before a hurried knocking came to the street-door.

"Ay, ay!" grumbled Burdock; "I thought it would not be long. London for knocking and ringing all day, and ringing and knocking all night." He opened the door reluctantly and suspiciously, and in darted a lady, whose features were concealed by a hood. She glided

across the hall, as if she was making for some point, and old James shuffled after her, crying: "Stop, stop! young woman. What is your name, young woman?"

"Why, James Burdock," cried the lady, removing her hood, "have you forgotten your mistress?"

"Mistress! Why, Miss Mabel, I ask your pardon, Madam—here, John, Margery!"

"Hush!" cried Mrs. Vane.

"But where are your trunks, Miss? And where's the coach, and Darby and Joan? To think of their drawing you all the way here! I'll have 'em into your room directly, Ma'am. Miss, you're come just in time."

"What a dear, good, stupid old thing you are, James. Where is Ernest—Mr. Vane? James, is he well and happy? I want to surprise him."

"Yes, Ma'am," said James, looking down.

"I left the stupid old coach at Islington, James. The something-pin was loose, or I don't know what. Could I wait two hours there? So I came on by myself. You wicked old man, you let me talk, and don't tell me how he is."

"Master is main well, Ma'am, and thank you," said old Burdock, confused and uneasy.

"But is he happy? Of course he is; are we not to meet to-day after six months? Ah! but never mind, they *are* gone by."

"Lord bless her!" thought the faithful old fellow. "If sitting down and crying could help her, I wouldn't be long."

By this time they were in the banqueting-room, and at the preparations there Mabel gave a start; she then coloured. "Oh! he has invited his friends to make acquaintance. I had rather we had been alone all this day and to-morrow. But he must not know that. No; *his* friends are *my* friends, and shall be, too," thought the country wife. She then glanced with some mis-

giving at her travelling attire, and wished she had brought *one* trunk with her.

"James," said she, "where is my room? And mind, I forbid you to tell a soul I am come."

"Your room, Miss Mabel?"

"Well, any room where there is looking-glass and water."

She then went to a door which opened in fact on a short passage leading to a room occupied by Mr. Vane himself.

"No, no!" cried James. "That is master's room."

"Well, is not master's room mistress's room, old man? But stay; is he there?"

"No, Ma'am; he is in the garden, with a power of fine folks."

"They shall not see me till I have made myself a little more decent," said the young beauty, who knew at bottom how little, comparatively, the colour of her dress could affect her appearance; and she opened Mr. Vane's door and glided in.

Burdock's first determination was, in spite of her injunction, to tell Colander; but on reflection, he argued: "And then what will they do? They will put their heads together, and deceive us in some other way. No!" thought James, with a touch of spite, "we shall see how they will all look." He argued also that at sight of his beautiful wife his master must come to his senses, and the Colander faction be defeated; and, perhaps, by the mercy of Providence, Colander himself turned off.

Whilst thus ruminating, a thundering knock at the door almost knocked him off his legs. "There ye go again," said he, and went angrily to the door. This time it was Hunsdon, who was in a desperate hurry to see his master.

"Where is Sir Charles Pomander, my honest fellow?" said he.

"In the garden, my Jack-a-dandy!" said Burdock, furiously.

("Honest fellow," among servants, implies some moral inferiority.)

In the garden went Hunsdon. His master—all whose senses were playing sentinel—saw him, and left the company to meet him.

"She is in the house, Sir."

"Good! Go; vanish!"

Sir Charles looked into the banquet-room; the haunch was being placed on the table. He returned with the information. He burned to bring husband and wife together; he counted each second lost that postponed this (to him) thrilling joy. Oh, how happy he was!—happier than the serpent, when he saw Eve's white teeth really strike into the apple!

"Shall we pay respect to this haunch, Mr. Quin?" said Vane, gaily.

"If you please, Sir," said Quin, gravely.

Colander ran down a by-path with an immense bouquet, which he arranged for Mrs. Woffington in a vase at Mr. Vane's left hand. He then threw open the windows, which were on the French plan, and shut within a foot of the lawn.

The musicians in the arbour struck up, and the company, led by Mr. Vane and Mrs. Woffington, entered the room. And a charming room it was!—light, lofty, and large—adorned in the French way with white and gold. The table was an exact oval, and at it everybody could hear what any one said; an excellent arrangement where ideaed guests only are admitted,—which is another excellent arrangement, though I see people don't think so.

The repast was luxurious and elegant. There was no profusion of unmeaning dishes; each was a *bonne-bouche,* an undeniable delicacy. The glass was beautiful, the plates silver; the flowers rose like walls from

the table; the plate massive and glorious; rose-water in the hand-glasses; music crept in from the garden, deliciously subdued into what seemed a natural sound. A broad stream of southern sun gushed in fiery gold through the open window, and like a red-hot rainbow, danced through the stained glass above it. Existence was a thing to bask in in such a place, and so happy an hour!

The guests were Quin, Mrs. Clive, Mr. Cibber, Sir Charles Pomander, Mrs. Woffington, and Messrs. Soaper and Snarl, critics of the day. This pair, with wonderful sagacity, had arrived from the street as the haunch came from the kitchen. Good humour reigned; some cuts passed, but as the parties professed wit, they gave and took.

Quin carved the haunch, and was happy; Soaper and Snarl eating the same, and drinking Toquay, were mellowed and mitigated into human flesh. Mr. Vane and Mrs. Woffington were happy,—he, because his conscience was asleep; and she, because she felt nothing now could shake her hold of him. Sir Charles was in a sort of mental chuckle. His head burned, his bones ached; but he was in a sort of nervous delight.

"Where is she?" thought he. "What will she do? Will she send her maid with a note? How blue he will look! Or, will she come herself? She is a country wife; there must be a scene. Oh! why doesn't she come into this room? She must know we are here! Is she watching somewhere?" His brain became puzzled, and his senses were sharpened to a point; he was all eye, ear, and expectation; and this was why he was the only one to hear a very slight sound behind the door we have mentioned, and next to perceive a lady's glove lying close to that door. Mabel had dropped it in her retreat. Putting this and that together, he was led to

hope and believe she was there, making her toilette perhaps, and her arrival at present unknown.

"Do you expect no one else?" said he, with feigned carelessness to Mr. Vane.

"No," said Mr. Vane, with real carelessness.

"It must be so! What fortune!" thought Pomander.

SOAPER.—Mr. Cibber looks no older than he did five years ago.

SNARL.—There was no room on his face for a fresh wrinkle.

SOAPER.—He! he! Nay, Mr. Snarl; Mr. Cibber is like old port,—the more ancient he grows, the more delicious his perfume.

SNARL.—And the crustier he gets.

CLIVE.—Mr. Vane, you should always separate those two. Snarl, by himself, is just supportable, but when Soaper paves the way with his hypocritical praise, the pair are too much; they are a two-edged sword.

WOFFINGTON.—Wanting nothing but polish and point.

VANE.—Gentlemen, we abandon your neighbour, Mr. Quin, to you.

QUIN.—They know better. If they don't keep a civil tongue in their heads, no fat goes from here to them.

CIBBER.—Ah, Mr. Vane; this room is delightful; but it makes me sad. I knew this house in Lord Lonqueville's time,—an unrivalled gallant, Peggy. You may just remember him, Sir Charles?

POMANDER (with his eye on a certain door).—Yes, yes; a gouty old fellow.

Cibber fired up. "I wish you may ever be like him. Oh, the beauty, the wit, the *petit soupers* that used to be here! Longueville was a great creature, Mr. Vane. I have known him entertain a fine lady in this room, while her rival was fretting and fuming on the other side of that door.

"Ah, indeed!" said Sir Charles.

"More shame for him," said Mr. Vane.

Here was luck! Pomander seized this opportunity of turning the conversation to his object. With a malicious twinkle in his eye, he inquired of Mr. Cibber what made him fancy the house had lost its virtue in Mr. Vane's hands?

"Because," said Cibber, peevishly, "you all want the true *savoir faire* now-a-days; because there is no *juste milieu,* young gentlemen. The young dogs of the day are all either unprincipled heathen like yourself, or Amadisses like our worthy host." The old gentleman's face and manners were like those of a patriarch, regretting the general decay of virtue, not the imaginary diminution of a single vice. He concluded, with a sigh, that "The true *preux des dames* went out with the full periwig; stop my vitals!"

"A bit of fat, Mr. Cibber?" said Quinn, whose jokes were not polished.

"Jemmy, thou art a brute," was the reply.

"You refuse, Sir?" said Quinn, sternly.

"No, Sir!" said Cibber, with dignity; "I accept."

Pomander's eye was ever on the door.

"The old are so unjust to the young," said he. "You pretend that the Deluge washed away iniquity, and that a rake is a fossil. What," said he, leaning as it were on every word, "if I bet you a cool hundred that Vane has a petticoat in that room, and that Mrs. Woffington shall unearth her?"

The malicious dog thought this was the surest way to effect a dramatic exposure; because, if Peggy found Mabel to all appearances concealed, Peggy would scold her, and betray herself.

"Pomander!" cried Vane, in great heat; then checking himself, he said, coolly, "But you all know Pomander."

"None of you," replied that gentleman. "Bring a

chair, Sir,' said he, authoritatively, to a servant; who, of course, obeyed.

Mrs. Clive looked at him, and thought, "There is something in this!"

"It is for the lady," said he, coolly. Then leaning over the table, he said to Mrs. Woffington, with an impudent affectation of friendly understanding: "I ran her to earth in this house not ten minutes ago. Of course I don't know who she is! But," smacking his lips, "a rustic Amaryllis, breathing all May-buds and Meadow-sweet."

"Have her out, Peggy!" shouted Cibber. "I know the run—there 's the covert! Hark forward! Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Vane rose and with a sternness that brought the old beau up with a run, he said: "Mr. Cibber, age and infirmity are privileged; but for you, Sir Charles—"

"Don't be angry," interposed Mrs. Woffington, whose terror was lest he should quarrel with so practised a swordsman. "Don't you see it is a jest; and as might be expected from poor Sir Charles, a very sorry one?"

"A jest!" said Vane, white with rage. "Let it go no farther, or it will be earnest!"

Mrs. Woffington placed her hand on his shoulder, and at that touch he instantly yielded, and sat down.

It was at this moment, when Sir Charles found himself for the present baffled,—for he could no longer press his point, and search that room,—when the attention of all was drawn to a dispute which, for a moment, had looked like a quarrel; whilst Mrs. Woffington's hand still lingered, as only a woman's hand can linger in leaving the shoulder of the man she loves; it was at this moment the door opened of its

own accord, and a most beautiful woman stood, with a light step, upon the threshold!

Nobody's back was to her, except Mr. Vane's. Every eye but his was spell-bound upon her.

Mrs. Woffington withdrew her hand as if a scorpion had touched her.

A stupor of astonishment fell on them all.

Mr. Vane, seeing the direction of all their eyes, slewed himself round in his chair into a most awkward position, and when he saw the lady he was utterly dumbfounded. But she, as soon as he turned his face her way, glided up to him with a little half-sigh, half-cry of joy, and taking him round the neck, kissed him deliciously, while every eye at the table met every other eye in turn. One or two of the men rose; for the lady's beauty was as worthy of homage as her appearing was marvellous.

Mrs. Woffington, too astonished for emotion to take any definite shape, said, in what seemed an ordinary tone, "Who is this lady?"

"I am his wife, Madam," said Mabel, in the voice of a skylark, and smiling friendly on the questioner.

"It is my wife!" said Vane, like a speaking-machine; he was scarcely in a conscious state. "It is my wife!" he repeated mechanically.

The words were no sooner out of Mabel's mouth than two servants, who had never heard of Mrs. Vane before, hastened to place on Mr. Vane's right-hand the chair Pomander had provided: a plate and napkin were there in a twinkling, and, the wife modestly, but as a matter of course, curtsied low, with an air of welcome to all her guests, and then glided into the seat her servants obsequiously placed for her.

The whole thing did not take half a minute!

CHAPTER XI

MR. VANE, besides being a rich, was a magnificent man; when his features were in repose their beauty had a wise and stately character. Soaper and Snarl had admired, and bitterly envied him. At the present moment no one of his guests envied him,—they began to realize his position. And he, a huge wheel of shame and remorse began to turn and whirr before his eyes. He sat between two European beauties, and pale and red by turns, shunned the eyes of both, and looked down at his plate in a cold sweat of humiliation, mortification, and shame.

The iron passed through Mrs. Woffington's soul. So! this was a villain too, the greatest villain of all,—a hypocrite! She turned very faint, but she was under an enemy's eye, and under a rival's; the thought drove the blood back from her heart, and with a mighty effort she was Woffington again. Hitherto her *liaison* with Mr. Vane had called up the better part of her nature, and perhaps our reader has been taking her for a good woman; but now all her dregs were stirred to the surface. The mortified actress gulled by a novice, the wronged and insulted woman, had but two thoughts: to defeat her rival, to be revenged on her false lover. More than one sharp spasm passed over her features before she could master them, and then she became smiles above, wormwood and red-hot steel below,—all in less than half a minute.

As for the others, looks of keen intelligence passed between them, and they watched with burning interest for the *dénouement*. That interest was stronger than

their sense of the comicality of all this; for the humorous view of what passes before our eyes comes upon cool reflection, not often at the time.

Sir Charles, indeed, who had foreseen some of this, wore a demure look, belied by his glittering eye. He offered Cibber snuff, and the two satirical animals grinned over the snuff-box, like a malicious old ape and a mischievous young monkey.

The new-comer was charming; she was above the middle height, of a full, though graceful figure; her abundant glossy, bright, brown hair glittered here and there like gold in the light; she had a snowy brow, eyes of the profoundest blue, a cheek like a peach, and a face beaming candour and goodness. The character of her countenance resembled "the Queen of the May," in Mr. Leslie's famous picture, more than any face of our day I can call to mind.

"You are not angry with me for this silly trick?" said she, with some misgiving. "After all I am only two hours before my time; you know, dearest, I said four in my letter—did I not?"

Vane stammered. What could he say?

"And you have had three days to prepare you, for I wrote, like a good wife, to ask leave before starting; but he never so much as answered my letter, Madam." This she addressed to Mrs. Woffington, who smiled by main force.

"Why," stammered Vane, "could you doubt? I—I—"

"No! Silence was consent, was it not? But I beg your pardon, ladies and gentlemen, I hope you will forgive me. It is six months since I saw him; so, you understand— I warrant me you did not look for me so soon, ladies?"

"Some of us did not look for you at all, Madam," said Mrs. Woffington.

"What! Ernest did not tell you he expected me?"

"No! He told us this banquet was in honour of a lady's first visit to his house; but none of us imagined that lady to be his wife."

Vane began to writhe under that terrible tongue, whose point hitherto had ever been turned away from him.

"He intended to steal a march on us," said Pomander, drily; "and with your help we steal one on him;" and he smiled maliciously on Mrs. Woffington.

"But, Madam," said Mr. Quinn, "the moment you did arrive I kept sacred for you a bit of the fat, for which, I am sure, you must be ready. Pass her plate."

"Not at present, Mr. Quinn," said Mr. Vane, hastily. "She is about to retire and change her travelling-dress."

"Yes, dear; but you forget, I am a stranger to your friends. Will you not introduce me to them first?"

"No, no!" cried Vane, in trepidation. "It is not usual to introduce in the *beau monde*."

"We always introduce ourselves," rejoined Mrs. Woffington; and she rose slowly, with her eye on Vane. He cast a look of abject entreaty on her; but there was no pity in that curling lip and awful eye. He closed his own eyes, and waited for the blow. Sir Charles threw himself back in his chair, and chuckling, prepared for the explosion. Mrs. Woffington saw him, and cast on him a look of ineffable scorn; and then she held the whole company fluttering a long while. At length, "The Honourable Mrs. Quickly, Madam," said she, indicating Mrs. Clive.

This turn took them all by surprise. Pomander bit his lip.

"Sir John Brute—"

"Falstaff," cried Quinn; "hang it."

"Sir John Brute Falstaff," resumed Mrs. Woffington. "We call him, for brevity, Brute."

Vane drew a long breath. "Your neighbour is Lord Foppington,—a butterfly of some standing, and a little gouty."

"Sir Charles Pomander."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Vane. "It is the good gentleman who helped us out of the slough, near Huntingdon. Ernest, if it had not been for this gentleman, I should not have had the pleasure of being here now." And she beamed on the good Pomander.

Mr. Vane did not rise and embrace Sir Charles.

"All the company thanks the good Sir Charles," said Cibber, bowing.

"I see it in all their faces," said the good Sir Charles, drily.

Mrs. Woffington continued: "Mr. Soaper, Mr. Snarl,—gentleman who would butter and slice up their own fathers!"

"Bless me!" cried Mrs. Vane, faintly.

"Critics!" And she dropped, as it were, the word drily, with a sweet smile, into Mabel's plate.

Mrs. Vane was relieved; she had apprehended cannibals. London, they had told her, was full of curiosities.

"But yourself, Madam?"

"I am the Lady Betty Modish, at your service."

A four-inch grin went round the table. The dramatic old rascal, Cibber, began now to look at it as a bit of genteel comedy, and slipped out his notebook under the table. Pomander cursed her ready wit, which had disappointed him of his catastrophe. Vane wrote on a slip of paper, "Pity and respect the innocent!" and passed it to Mrs. Woffington. He could not have done a more superfluous or injudicious thing.

"And now, Ernest," cried Mabel, "for the news from Willoughby."

Vane stopped her in dismay. He felt how many satirical eyes and ears were upon him and his wife. "Pray go and change your dress first, Mabel," cried he, fully determined that on her return she should not find the present party there.

Mrs. Vane cast an imploring look on Mrs. Woffington. "My things are not come," said she. "And, Lady Betty, I had so much to tell him; and to be sent away—" and the deep blue eyes began to fill.

Now, Mrs. Woffington was determined that this lady, who she saw was simple, should disgust her husband by talking twaddle before a band of satirists. So she said, warmly, "It is not fair on us. Pray, Madam, your budget of country news. Clouted cream so seldom comes to London quite fresh."

"There, you see, Ernest," said the unsuspicious soul. "First, you must know that Grey Gillian is turned out for a brood mare, so old George won't let me ride her; old servants are such tyrants, my lady. And my Barbary hen has laid two eggs; Heaven knows the trouble we had to bring her to it. And Dane Best, that is my husband's old nurse, Mrs. Quickly, has had soup and pudding from the Hall every day; and once she went so far as to say it wasn't altogether a bad pudding. She is not a very grateful woman, in a general way, poor thing! I made it with these hands."

Vane writhed.

"Happy pudding!" observed Mr. Cibber.

"Is this mockery, Sir?" cried Vane, with a sudden burst of irritation.

"No, Sir; it is gallantry," replied Cibber, with perfect coolness.

"Will you hear a little music in the garden?" said

Vane to Mrs. Woffington, pooh-poohing his wife's news.

"Not till I hear the end of Dame Bess."

"Best, my lady."

"Dame Best interests *me*, Mr. Vane."

"Ay! and Ernest is very fond of her, too, when he is at home. She is in her nice new cottage, dear; but she misses the draughts that were in her old one,—they were like old friends. 'The only ones I have, I'm thinking,' said the dear, cross, old thing; and there stood I on her floor, with a flannel-petticoat in both hands that I had made for her, and ruined my finger. Look else, my Lord Foppington." She extended a hand the colour of cream.

"Permit me, Madam?" taking out his glasses, with which he inspected her finger; and gravely announced to the company, "The laceration is, in fact, discernible. May I be permitted, Madam," added he, "to kiss this fair hand, which I should never have suspected of having ever made itself so useful?"

"Ay, my lord!" said she, colouring slightly, "you shall, because you are so old; but I don't say for a young gentleman, unless it was the one that belongs to me,—and he does not ask me."

"My dear Mabel, pray remember we are not at Willoughby."

"I see we are not, Ernest." And the dove-like eyes filled brimful, and all her innocent prattle was put an end to.

"What brutes men are!" thought Mrs. Woffington. "They are not worthy even of a fool like this."

Mr. Vane once more pressed her to hear a little music in the garden; and this time she consented. Mr. Vane was far from being unmoved by his wife's arrival, and her true affection; but she worried him. He was anxious, above all things, to escape from his

present position, and separate the rival queens; and this was the only way he could see to do it. He whispered Mabel, and bade her, somewhat peremptorily, rest herself for an hour after her journey, and he entered the garden with Mrs. Woffington.

Now, the other gentlemen admired Mrs. Vane the most. She was new. She was as lovely, in her way, as Peggy; and it was the young May morn beauty of the country. They forgave her simplicity, and even her goodness, on account of her beauty; men are not severe judges of beautiful women. They all solicited her to come with them, and be the queen of the garden. But the good wife was obedient. Her lord had told her she was fatigued; so she said she was tired.

"Mr. Vane's garden will lack its sweetest and fairest flower, Madam," cried Cibber, "if we leave you here."

"Nay, my Lord, there are fairer than I."

"Poor Quin!" cried Kitty Clive; "to have to leave the alderman's walk for the garden-walk."

"All I regret," said the honest glutton, stoutly, "is that I go without carving for Mrs. Vane."

"You are very good, Sir John; I will be more troublesome to you at supper-time."

When they were all gone, she couldn't help sighing. It almost seemed as if everybody was kinder to her than he whose kindness alone she valued. "And he must take Lady Betty's hand instead of mine," thought she. "But that is good breeding, I suppose. I wish there was no such thing; we are very happy without it in Shropshire." Then this poor little soul was ashamed of herself, and took herself to task. "Poor Ernest," said she, pitying the wrong-doer, like a woman, "he was not pleased to be so taken by surprise. No wonder; they are so ceremonious in London. How good of him not to be angry!" Then she sighed; her heart had received a damp. His voice seemed changed, and

he did not meet her eyes with the look he wore at Willoughby. She looked timidly into the garden. She saw the gay colours of beaux as well as of belles,—for in these days broadcloth had not displaced silk and velvet,—glancing and shining among the trees, and she sighed; but presently brightening up a little, she said: "I will go and see that the coffee is hot and clear, and the chocolate well mixed for them." The poor child wanted to do something to please her husband. Before she could carry out this act of domestic virtue, her attention was drawn to a strife of tongues in the hall. She opened the folding doors, and there was a fine gentleman obstructing the entrance of a sombre rusty figure, with a portfolio and a manuscript under each arm.

The fine gentleman was Colander. The seedy personage was the eternal Triplet, come to make hay with his five-foot rule while the sun shone. Colander had opened the door to him, and he had shot into the hall. The major-domo obstructed the farther entrance of such a coat.

"I tell you my master is not at home," remonstrated the major-domo.

"How can you say so," cried Mrs. Vane, in surprise, "when you know he is in the garden?"

"Simpleton!" thought Colander.

"Show the gentleman in."

"Gentleman!" muttered Colander.

Triplet thanked her for her condescension; he would wait for Mr. Vane in the hall. "I came by appointmen, Madam; this is the only excuse for the importunity you have just witnessed."

Hearing this, Mrs. Vane dismissed Colander to inform his master. Colander bowed loftily, and walked into the servants' hall without deigning to take the last proposition into consideration.

"Come in here, Sir," said Mabel; "Mr. Vane will come as soon as he can leave his company." Triplet entered in a series of obsequious jerks. "Sit down and rest you, Sir." And Mrs. Vane seated herself at the table, and motioned with her white hand to Triplet to sit beside her.

Triplet bowed, and sat on the edge of a chair, and smirked and dropped his portfolio, and instantly begged Mrs. Vane's pardon; in taking it up, he let fall his manuscript, and was again confused. But in the middle of some superfluous and absurd excuse his eye fell on the haunch; it straightway dilated to an enormous size, and he became suddenly silent and absorbed in contemplation.

"You look sadly tired, Sir."

"Why, yes, Madam. It is a long way from Lambeth Walk, and it is passing hot, Madam." He took his handkerchief out and was about to wipe his brow, but returned it hastily to his pocket. "I beg your pardon, Madam," said Triplet, whose ideas of breeding, though speculative, were severe, "I forgot myself."

Mabel looked at him, and coloured, and slightly hesitated. At last she said: "I'll be bound you came in such a hurry you forgot—you must'nt be angry with me—to have your dinner first."

For Triplet looked like an absurd wolf,—all benevolence and starvation!

"What divine intelligence!" thought Trip. "How strange, Madam!" cried he; "you have hit it! This accounts, at once, for a craving I feel. Now you remind me, I recollect carving for others,—I did forget to remember myself. Not that I need have forgot it to-day, Madam; but being used to forget it, I did not remember not to forget it to-day, Madam, that was all." And the author of this intelligent account smiled, very, very, very, absurdly.

She poured him out a glass of wine. He rose and bowed, but peremptorily refused it,—with his tongue; his eye drank it.

"But you must," persisted this hospitable lady.

"But, Madam, consider; I am not entitled to— Nectar, as I am a man!"

The white hand was filling his plate with partridge pie. "But Madam, you don't consider how you overwhelm me with your— Ambrosia, as I am a poet!"

"I am sorry Mr. Vane should keep you waiting."

"By no means, Madam; it is very fortunate—I mean it procures me the pleasure of—" (here articulation became obstructed) "your society, Madam. Besides, the servants of the Muse are used to waiting. What we are not used to is" (here her white hand filled his glass) "being waited upon by Hebe and the Twelve Graces, whose health I have the honour—" (Deglutition.)

"A poet!" cried Mabel; "oh! I am so glad! Little did I think ever to see a living poet! Dear heart! I should not have known, if you had not told me. Sir, I love poetry!"

"It is in your face, Madam." Triplet instantly whipped out his manuscript, put a plate on one corner of it, and a decanter on the other, and begged her opinion of this trifle, "composed," said he, "in honour of a lady Mr. Vane entertains to-day."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Vane, and coloured with pleasure. How ungrateful she had been! Here was an attention! —for, of course, she never doubted that the verses were in honour of her arrival.

"'Bright being—'"

sang out Triplet.

"Nay, Sir," said Mabel; "I think I know the lady, and it would be hardly proper of me—"

"Oh! Madam!" said Triplet, solemnly; "strictly correct, Madam!" And he spread his hand out over his bosom. "Strictly!—'Blunderbuss' (my poetical name, Madam,) never stooped to the taste of the town.

"'Bright being, thou—'"

"But you must have another glass of wine first, and a slice of the haunch."

"With alacrity, Madam." He laid in a fresh stock of provisions.

Strange it was to see them side by side!—*he* a Don Quixote, with cordage instead of lines in his mahogany face, and clothes hanging upon him; *she*, smooth, ducklike, delicious, and bright as an opening rose fresh with dew!

She watched him kindly, archly, and demurely; and still plied him country wise with every mortal thing on the table.

But the poet was not a boa-constrictor, and even a boa-constrictor has an end. Hunger satisfied, his next strongest feeling, simple vanity, remained to be contented. As the last morsel went in, out came—

"'Bright being, thou whose ra—'"

"No! no!" said she, who fancied herself (and not without reason) the bright being. "Mr. Vane intended them for a surprise."

"As you please, Madam;" and the disappointed bore sighed. "But you would have liked them, for the theme inspired me,—the kindest, the most generous of women! Don't you agree with me, Madam?"

Mabel Vane opened her eyes. "Hardly, Sir," laughed she.

"If you knew her as I do—"

"I ought to know her better, Sir."

"Ay, indeed! Well, Madam, now her kindness to

me, for instance,—a poor devil like me. The expression, I trust, is not disagreeable to you, Madam? If so, forgive me, and consider it withdrawn."

"La, Sir! civility is so cheap, if you go to that."

"Civility, Ma'am? Why, she has saved me from despair,—from starvation, perhaps."

"Poor thing! Well, indeed, Sir, you looked—you looked—What a shame! and you a poet."

"From an epitaph to an epic, Madam."

At this moment a figure looked in upon them from the garden, but retreated unobserved. It was Sir Charles Pomander, who had slipped away with the heartless and malicious intention of exposing the husband to the wife, and profiting by her indignation and despair. Seeing Triplet, he made an extemporaneous calculation that so infernal a chatter-box could not be ten minutes in her company without telling her everything, and this would serve his turn very well. He therefore postponed his purpose, and strolled away to a short distance.

Triplet justified the Baronet's opinion. Without any sort of sequency, he now informed Mrs. Vane that the benevolent lady was to sit to him for her portrait.

Here was a new attention of Ernest's. How good he was, and how wicked and ungrateful she!

"What! are you a painter, too?" she inquired.

"From a house-front to an historical composition, Madam."

"Oh, what a clever man! And so Ernest commissioned you to paint a portrait?"

"No, Madam; for that I am indebted to the lady herself."

"Yes, Madam; and I expected to find her here. Will you add to your kindness by informing me whether she has arrived? Or she is gone—"

"Who, Sir? (Oh dear! not my portrait! Oh, Ernest!)"

"Who, Madam!" cried Triplet; "why, Mrs. Woffington!"

"She is not here," said Mrs. Vane, who remembered all the names perfectly well. "There is one charming lady among our guests; her face took me in a moment. But she is a titled lady; there is no Mrs. Woffington amongst them."

"Strange!" replied Triplet; "she was to be here,—and in fact that is why I expedited these lines in her honour."

"In *her* honour, Sir?"

"Yes, Madam. Allow me:

"'Bright being, thou whose radiant brow—'"

"No! No! I don't care to hear them now, for I don't know the lady."

"Well, Madam—but at least you have seen her act?"

"Act! You don't mean all this is for an actress?"

"*An* actress? *The* actress! And you have never seen her act? What a pleasure you have to come! To see her act is a privilege; but to act with her, as *I* once did! But she does not remember that, nor shall I remind her, Madam," said Triplet, sternly. "On that occasion I was hissed, owing to circumstances which, for the credit of our common nature, I suppress."

"What! are you an actor, too? You are everything."

"And it was in a farce of my own, Madam, which, by the strangest combination of accidents, was damned!"

"A play-writer? Oh, what clever men there are in the world,—in London, at least. He is a play-writer, too; I wonder my husband comes not. Does Mr. Vane—does Mr. Vane admire this actress?" said she, suddenly.

"Mr. Vane, Madam, is a gentleman of taste," said he, pompously.

"Well, Sir," said the lady, languidly, "she is not here."

Triplet took the hint and rose. "Good-bye," said she, sweetly; "and thank you kindly for your company, Mr. —Mr.—"

"Triplet, Madam,—James Triplet, of 10 Hercules Buildings, Lambeth. Occasional verses, odes, epithalamia, elegies, dedications, squibs, impromptus, and hymns, executed with spirit, punctuality, and secrecy. Portraits painted and instruction in declamation, sacred, profane, and dramatic. The card, Madam" (and he drew it as doth a theatrical fop his rapier), "of him who, to all these qualifications, adds a prouder still—that of being, Madam,

"Your humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

"JAMES TRIPLET."

He bowed in a line from his right shoulder to his left toe, and moved off. But Triplet could not go all at one time out of such company; he was given to return in real life, he had played this trick so often on the stage. He came back, exuberant with gratitude.

"The fact is, Madam," said he, "strange as it may appear to you, a kind hand has not so often been held out to me that I should forget it, especially when that hand is so fair and gracious. May I be permitted, Madam—you will impute it to gratitude, rather than audacity—I—I—" (whimper). "Madam" (with sudden severity), "I am gone!"

These last words he pronounced with the right arm at an angle of forty-five degrees, and the fingers pointing horizontally. The stage had taught him this grace also. In his day an actor who had three words to say, such as, "My lord's carriage is waiting," came on the stage with the right arm thus elevated, delivered his message in the tone of a falling dynasty, wheeled like a soldier, and retired with the left arm pointing to the sky, and the right extended behind him like a setter's tail.

Left to herself, Mabel was uneasy. "Ernest is so

warm-hearted." This was the way she put it even to herself. "He admired her acting, and wished to pay her a compliment. What if I carried him the verses?" She thought she should surely please him, by showing she was not the least jealous or doubtful of him. The poor child wanted so to win a kind look from her husband; but ere she could reach the window, Sir Charles Pomander had entered it.

Now, Sir Charles was naturally welcome to Mrs. Vane; for all she knew of him was that he had helped her on the road to her husband.

POMANDER.—What, Madam! all alone here as in Shropshire?

MABEL.—For the moment, Sir.

POMANDER.—Force of habit. A husband with a wife in Shropshire is so like a bachelor.

MABEL.—Sir!

POMANDER.—And our excellent Ernest is such a favourite!

MABEL.—No wonder, Sir.

POMANDER.—Few can so pass from the larva state of country squire to the butterfly nature of beau.

MABEL.—Yes; (sadly) I find him changed.

POMANDER.—Changed! Transformed. He is now the prop of the 'Cocoa Tree,' the star of Ranelagh, the Lauzun of the green-room.

MABEL.—The green-room! Where is that? You mean kindly, Sir; but you make me unhappy.

POMANDER.—The green-room, my dear Madam, is the bower where houris put off their wings and goddesses become dowdies; where Lady Macbeth weeps over her lap-dog, dead from repletion; and Belvidera soothes her broken heart with a dozen of oysters; in a word, it is the place where actors and actresses become men and women, and act their own parts with skill, instead of a poet's, clumsily.

MABEL.—Actors! actresses! Does Mr. Vane frequent such—

POMANDER.—He has earned in six months a reputation many a fine gentleman would give his ears for. Not a scandalous journal his initials have not figured in; not an actress of reputation gossip has not given him for a conquest.

"How dare you say this to me?" cried Mrs. Vane, with a sudden flash of indignation, and then the tears streamed over her lovely cheeks; and even a Pomander might have forborne to torture her so; but Sir Charles had no mercy.

"You would be sure to learn it," said he; "and with malicious additions. It is better to hear the truth from a friend."

"A friend? He is no friend to a house who calumniates the husband to the wife. Is it the part of a friend to distort dear Ernest's kindliness and gaiety into ill morals; to pervert his love of poetry and plays into an unworthy attachment to actors and—oh!" and the tears would come. But she dried them, for now she hated this man; with all the little power of hatred she had, she detested him. "Do you suppose I did not know Mrs. Woffington was to come to us to-day?" cried she, struggling passionately against her own fears and Sir Charles's innuendoes.

"What!" cried he; "you recognised her? You detected the actress of all work under the airs of Lady Betty Modish?"

"Lady Betty Modish!" cried Mabel; "that good, beautiful face!"

"Ah!" cried Sir Charles. "I see you did not. Well, Lady Betty was Mrs. Woffington!"

"Whom, my husband, I know, had invited here to present her with these verses, which I shall take him for her"; and her poor little lip trembled. "Had the

visit been in any other character, as you are so base, so cruel, as to insinuate (what have I done to you that you kill me so, you wicked gentleman?) would he have chosen the day of my arrival?"

"Not if he knew you were coming," was the cool reply.

"And he did know; I wrote to him."

"Indeed!" said Pomander, fairly puzzled.

Mrs. Vane caught sight of her handwriting on the tray and darted to it, and seized her letter, and said, triumphantly:—

"My last letter, written upon the road—see!"

Sir Charles took it with surprise; but turning it in his hand, a cool, satirical smile came to his face. He handed it back, and said, coldly:—

"Read me the passage, Madam, on which you argue."

Poor Mrs. Vane turned the letter in her hand, and her eye became instantly glazed; the seal was unbroken! She gave a sharp cry of agony, like a wounded deer. She saw Pomander no longer; she was alone with her great anguish. "I had but my husband and my God in the world," cried she. "My mother is gone. My God, have pity on me! My husband does not love me!"

The cold villain was startled at the mighty storm his mean hand had raised. This creature had not only more feeling, but more passion than a hundred libertines. He muttered some villain's commonplaces, while this unhappy young lady raised her hands to heaven, and sobbed in a way very terrible to any manly heart.

"He is unworthy you," muttered Pomander. "He has forfeited your love; he has left you nothing but revenge. Be comforted. Let me, who have learned already to adore you—"

"So," cried she, turning on him in a moment (for on some points woman's instinct is the lightning of wisdom), "this, Sir, was your object? I may no longer hold a place in my husband's heart, but I am mistress of

his house. Leave it, Sir! and never return to it whilst I live."

Sir Charles, again discomfited, bowed reverentially. "Your wish shall ever be respected by me, Madam. But here they come. Use the right of a wife; conceal yourself in that high chair. See, I turn it so that they cannot see you. At least, you will find I have but told you the truth."

"No!" cried Mabel, violently. "I will not spy upon my husband at the dictation of his treacherous friend."

Sir Charles vanished. He was no sooner gone than Mrs. Vane crouched, trembling and writhing with jealousy, in the large, high-backed chair. She heard her husband and the *soi-disant* Lady Betty Modish enter. During their absence Mrs. Woffington had doubtless been playing her cards with art, for it appeared that a reconciliation was now taking place. The lady, however, was still cool and distant. It was poor Mabel's fate to hear these words: "You must permit me to go alone, Mr. Vane. I insist upon leaving this house alone."

On this he whispered to her.

She answered, "You are not justified."

"I can explain all," was his reply. "I am ready to renounce credit, character, all the world for you."

They passed out of the room before the unhappy listener could recover the numbing influence of these deadly words.

But the next moment she started wildly up, and cried as one drowning cries vaguely for help: "Ernest! oh, no—no! you cannot use me so! Ernest—husband! Oh, mother! mother!"

She rose, and would have made for the door, but nature had been too cruelly tried. At the first step she could no longer see anything; and the next moment, swooning dead away, she fell back insensible, with her head and shoulders resting on the chair.

CHAPTER XII

MR. VANE was putting Mrs. Woffington into her chair, when he thought he heard his name cried. He bade that lady a mournful farewell, and stepped back into his own hall. He had no sooner done so, than he heard a voice, the accent of which alarmed him, though he distinguished no word. He hastily crossed the hall, and flew into the banquet-room. Coming rapidly in at the folding-doors, he almost fell over his wife, lying insensible, half upon the floor, and half upon the chair. When he saw her pale and motionless a terrible misgiving seized him; he fell on his knees.

"Mabel! Mabel!" cried he; "my love! my innocent wife! Oh, God! what have I done? Perhaps it is the fatigue—perhaps she has fainted."

"No, it is not the fatigue!" screamed a voice near him. It was old James Burdock, who, with his white hair streaming, and his eye gleaming with fire, shook his fist in his master's face. "No, it is not the fatigue, you villain! It is you who have killed her, with your jezebels and harlots, you scoundrel!"

"Send the women here, James, for God's sake!" cried Mr. Vane, not even noticing the insult he had received from a servant. He stamped furiously, and cried for help. The whole household was round her in a moment. They carried her to bed.

The remorse-stricken man, his own knees trembling under him, flew in an agony of fear and self-reproach for a doctor!

A doctor?

CHAPTER XIII

DURING the garden scene Mr. Vane had begged Mrs. Woffington to let him accompany her. She peremptorily refused, and said in the same breath she was going to Triplet, in Hercules Building, to have her portrait finished.

Had Mr. Vane understood the sex, he would not have interpreted her refusal to the letter, when there was a postscript the meaning of which was so little enigmatical.

Some three hours after the scene we have described Mrs. Woffington sat in Triplet's apartment, and Triplet, palette in hand, painted away upon her portrait.

Mrs. Woffington was in that languid state which comes to women after their hearts have received a blow. She felt as if life was ended, and but the dregs of existence remained; but at times a flood of bitterness rolled over her, and she resigned all hope of perfect happiness in this world—all hope of loving and respecting the same creature; and at these moments she had but one idea—to use her own power, and bind her lover to her by chains never to be broken, and to close her eyes, and glide down the precipice of the future.

"I think you are master of this art," said she, very languidly, to Triplet, "you paint so rapidly."

"Yes, madam," said Triplet, gloomily, and painted on. "Confound this shadow!" added he, and painted on.

His soul, too, was clouded. Mrs. Woffington, yawning in his face, had told him she had invited all Mr. Vane's company to come and praise his work; and ever since that he had been *morne et silencieux*.

"You are fortunate," continued Mrs. Woffington, not caring what she said; "it is so difficult to make execution keep pace with conception."

"Yes, Ma'am;" and he painted on.

"You are satisfied with it?"

"Anything but, Ma'am;" and he painted on.

"Cheerful soul!—then I presume it is like?"

"Not a bit, Ma'am;" and he painted on.

Mrs. Woffington stretched.

"You can't yawn, Ma'am; you can't yawn."

"Oh, yes, I can. You are such good company"; and she stretched again.

"I was just about to catch the turn of the lip," remonstrated Triplet.

"Well, catch it—it won't run away."

"I'll try, Ma'am. A pleasant half-hour it will be for me when they all come here, like cits at a shilling ordinary—each for his cut."

"At a sensitive goose!"

"That is as may be, Madam. Those critics flay us alive!"

"You should not leave so many doors open to censure."

"No, Ma'am. Head a little more that way. I suppose you *can't* sit quiet, Ma'am?—then never mind!" (This resignation was intended as a stinging reproach.) "Mr. Cibber, with his sneering snuff-box! Mr. Quin, with his humorous bludgeon! Mrs. Clive, with her tongue! Mr. Snarl, with his abuse! And Mr. Soaper, with his praise!—arsenic in treacle I call it! But there, I deserve it all! For look on this picture, and on this!"

"Meaning, I am painted as well as my picture!"

"Oh, no, no, no! But to turn from your face, Madam, on which the lightning of expression plays continually, to this stony, detestable, dead daub! I could—and I will, too! Imposture! dead caricature of life and beauty, take that!" and he dashed his palette-knife through the can-

vas. "Libellous lie against nature and Mrs. Woffington, take that!" and he stabbed the canvas again. Then, with sudden humility, "I beg your pardon, Ma'am," said he, "for this apparent outrage, which I trust you will set down to the excitement attendant upon failure. The fact is, I am an incapable ass, and no painter! Others have often hinted as much; but I never observed it myself till now!"

"Right through my pet dimple!" said Mrs. Woffington, with perfect *nonchalance*. "Well, now I suppose I may yawn, or do what I like?"

"You may, Madam," said Triplet, gravely. "I have forfeited what little control I had over you, Madam."

So they sat opposite each other, in mournful silence. At length the actress suddenly rose. She struggled fiercely against her depression, and vowed that melancholy should not benumb her spirits and her power.

"He ought to have been here by this time," said she to herself. "Well, I will not mope for him; I must do something. Triplet," said she.

"Madam."

"Nothing."

"No, Madam."

She sat gently down again, and leaned her head on her hand, and thought. She was beautiful as she thought!—her body seemed bristling with mind! At last, her thoughtful gravity was illumined by a smile; she had thought out something—*excogitaverat*.

"Triplet, the picture is quite ruined?"

"Yes, Madam—and a coach-load of criticism coming!"

"Triplet, we actors and actresses have often bright ideas."

"Yes, Ma'am."

"When we take other people's!"

"He! he" went Triplet. "Those are our best, Madam!"

"Well, Sir, I have got a bright idea."

"You don't say so, Ma'am!"

"Don't be a brute, dear!" said the lady, gravely.

Triplet stared!

"When I was in France, taking lessons of Dumesnil, one of the actors of the Théâtre Français had his portrait painted by a rising artist. The others were to come and see it. They determined beforehand to mortify the painter and the sitter by abusing the work in good set terms. But somehow this got wind, and the patients resolved to be the physicians. They put their heads together, and contrived that the living face should be in the canvas, surrounded by the accessories; these, of course, were painted. Enter the actors, who played their little pre-arranged farce; and when they had each given the picture a slap the picture rose and laughed in their faces, and discomfited them! By the bye, the painter did not stop there; he was not content with a short laugh, he laughed at them five hundred years!"

"Good gracious, Mrs. Woffington!"

"He painted a picture of the whole thing; and as his work is immortal, ours an April snowflake, he has got tremendously the better of those rash little satirists. Well, Trip, what is sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose; so give me the sharpest knife in the house."

Triplet gave her a knife, and looked confused, while she cut away the face of the picture, and by dint of scraping, cutting, and measuring, got her face two parts through the canvas. She then made him take his brush and paint all round her face, so that the transition might not be too abrupt. Several yards of green baize were also produced. This was to be disposed behind the easel, so as to conceal her.

Triplet painted here, and touched and retouched there. Whilst thus occupied he said, in his calm, resigned way: "It won't do, Madam. I suppose you know that?"

"I know nothing," was the reply. "Life is a guess.

I don't think we could deceive Roxalana and Lucy this way, because their eyes are without coloured spectacles. But when people have once begun to see by prejudices and judge by jargon, what can't be done with them? Who knows,—do you? I don't; so let us try."

"I beg your pardon, Madam; my brush touched your face."

"No offence, Sir; I am used to that. And I beg, if you can't tone the rest of the picture up to me, that you will instantly tone me down to the rest. Let us be in tune, whatever it costs, Sir."

"I will avail myself of the privilege, Madam, but sparingly. Failure, which is certain, Madam, will cover us with disgrace."

"Nothing is certain in this life, Sir, except that you are a goose. It succeeded in France; and England can match all Europe for fools. Besides, it will be well done. They say Davy Garrick can turn his eyes into bottled gooseberries. Well, Peg Woffington will turn hers into black currants. Haven't you done? I wonder they have not come. Make haste!"

"They will know by its beauty I never did it."

"That is a sensible remark, Trip. But I think they will rather argue backwards,—that, as you did it, it cannot be beautiful, and so cannot be me. Your reputation will be our shield."

"Well, Madam, now you mention it, they are like enough to take that ground. They despise all I do; if they did not—"

"You would despise them."

At this moment the pair were startled by the sound of a coach. Triplet turned as pale as ashes. Mrs. Woffington had her misgivings; but not choosing to increase the difficulty, she would not let Triplet, whose self-possession she doubted, see any sign of emotion in her.

"Lock the door," said she, firmly, "and don't be silly. Now hold up my green baize petticoat, and let me be in a half-light. Now put that table and those chairs before me, so that they can't come right up to me; and, Triplet, don't let them come within six yards if you can help it. Say it is unfinished, and so must be seen from a focus."

"A focus! I don't know what you mean."

"No more do I; no more will they, perhaps; and if they don't, they will swallow it directly. Unlock the door; are they coming?"

"They are only at the first stair."

"Mr. Triplet, your face is a book, where one may read strange matters. For Heaven's sake, compose yourself; let all the risk lie in one countenance. Look at me, Sir. Make your face like the Book of Daniel in a Jew's back parlor. Volto Sciolto is your cue."

"Madam, Madam, how your tongue goes! I hear them on the stairs; pray don't speak!"

"Do you know what we are going to do?" continued the tormenting Peggy. "We are going to weigh goose's feathers!—to criticise criticism, Trip—"

"Hush! hush!"

A grampus was heard outside the door, and Triplet opened it. There was Quin leading the band.

"Have a care, Sir," cried Triplet; "there is a hiatus the third step from the door."

"A *gradus ad Parnassum* a-wanting," said Mr. Cibber.

Triplet's heart sank. The hole had been there six months, and he had found nothing witty to say about it, and at first sight Mr. Cibber had done its business. And on such men he and his portrait were to attempt a preposterous delusion. Then there was Snarl, who wrote critiques on painting, and guided the national taste. The unlucky exhibitor was in a cold sweat; he led the way like a thief going to the gallows.

"The picture being unfinished, gentlemen," said he,

"must, if you would do me justice, be seen from a—a focus; must be judged from here, I mean."

"Where, Sir?" said Mr. Cibber.

"About here, Sir, if you please," said poor Triplet, faintly.

"It looks like a finished picture from here," said Mrs. Clive.

"Yes, Madam," groaned Triplet.

They all took up a position, and Triplet timidly raised his eyes along with the rest; he was a little surprised. The actress had flattened her face. She had done all that could be done, and more than he had conceived possible, in the way of extracting life and the atmosphere of expression from her countenance. She was "dead still."

There was a pause.

Triplet fluttered. At last some of them spoke as follows:—

SOAPER.—Ah!

QUIN.—Ho!

CLIVE.—Eh!

CIBBER.—Humph!

These interjections are small on paper; but as the good creatures uttered them they were eloquent; there was a cheerful variety of dispraise skilfully thrown into each of them.

"Well," continued Soaper, with his everlasting smile.

Then the fun began.

"May I be permitted to ask whose portrait this is?" said Mr. Cibber, slily.

"I distinctly told you it was to be Peg Woffington's," said Mrs. Clive. "I think you might take my word."

"Do you act as truly as you paint?" said Quin.

"Your fame runs no risk from me, Sir!" replied Triplet.

"It is not like Peggy's beauty! Eh?" rejoined Quin.

"I can't agree with you," cried Kitty Clive. "I think

it a very pretty face, and not at all like Peg Woffington's."

"Compare paint with paint," said Quin. "Are you sure you ever saw down to Peggy's real face?"

Triplet had seen with alarm that Mr. Snarl spoke not; many satirical expressions crossed his face, but he said nothing. Triplet gathered from this that he had at once detected the trick.

"Ah!" thought Triplet, "he means to quiz them as well as expose me. He is hanging back; and, in point of fact, a mighty satirist like Snarl would naturally choose to quiz six people rather than two."

"Now, I call it beautiful!" said the traitor Soaper. "So calm and reposeful,—no particular expression."

"None whatever," said Snarl.

"Gentlemen," said Triplet, "does it never occur to you that the fine arts are tender violets, and cannot blow when the north winds—"

"Blow!" inserted Quin.

"—are so cursed cutting?" continued Triplet.

"My good Sir, I am never cutting!" smirked Soaper. "My dear Snarl," whined he, "give us the benefit of your practised judgment. Do justice to this admirable work of art," drawled the traitor.

"I will!" said Mr. Snarl; and placed himself before the picture.

"What on earth will he say?" thought Triplet. "I can see by his face he has found us out."

Mr. Snarl delivered a short critique. Mr. Snarl's intelligence was not confined to his phrases; all critics use intelligent phrases and philosophical truths. But this gentleman's manner was very intelligent; it was pleasant, quiet, assured, and very convincing. Had the reader or I been there he would have carried us with him, as he did his hearers,—and as his successors carry the public with them now.

"Your brush is by no means destitute of talent," Mr. Triplet," said Mr. Snarl. "But you are somewhat deficient, at present, in the great principles of your art; the first of which is a loyal adherence to truth. Beauty itself is but one of the forms of truth, and nature is our finite exponent of infinite truth."

His auditors gave him a marked attention. They could not but acknowledge that men who go to the bottom of things like this should be the best instructors.

"Now, in nature a woman's face at this distance—ay, even at this short distance—melts into the air. There is none of that sharpness, but, on the contrary, a softness of outline." He made a lorgnette of his two hands; the others did so too, and found they saw much better,—oh, ever so much better! "Whereas yours," resumed Snarl, "is hard; and, forgive me, rather tea-board like. Then your *chiaro scuro*, my good Sir, is very defective; for instance, in nature, the nose, intercepting the light on one side of the face, throws, of necessity, a shadow under the eye. Caravaggio, Venetians generally, and the Bolognese masters, do particular justice to this. No such shade appears in this portrait."

"'Tis so, stop my vitals!" observed Colley Cibber. And they all looked, and having looked, wagged their heads in assent,—as the fat, white lords at Christie's waggle fifty pounds more out for a copy of Rembrandt, a brown levitical Dutchman, visible in the pitch dark by some sleight of sun Newton had not wit to discover.

Soaper dissented from the mass.

"But, my dear Snarl, if there are no shades, there are lights, loads of lights."

"There are," replied Snarl; "only they are impossible, that is all. You have, however," concluded he, with a manner slightly supercilious, "succeeded in the mechanical parts; the hair and the dress are well, Mr. Triplet; but *your* Woffington is not a woman, nor nature."

They all nodded and waggled assent; but this sagacious motion was arrested as by an earthquake.

The picture rang out, in the voice of a clarion, an answer that outlived the speaker: "She's a woman! for she has taken four men in! She's nature! for a fluent dunce doesn't know her when he sees her!"

Imagine the tableau! It was charming! Such opening of eyes and mouths! Cibber fell by second nature into an attitude of the old comedy. And all were rooted where they stood, with surprise and incipient mortification, except Quin, who slapped his knee, and took the trick at its value.

Peg Woffington slipped out of the green baize, and coming round from back of the late picture, stood in person before them, while they looked alternately at her and at the hole in the canvas. She then came at each of them in turn, *more dramatico.*

"'A pretty face, and not like Woffington.' I owe you two, Kate Clive."

"'Who ever saw Peggy's real face?' Look at it now, if you can, without blushing, Mr. Quin."

Quin, a good-humoured fellow, took the wisest view of his predicament, and burst into a hearty laugh.

"For all this," said Mr. Snarl, peevishly, "I maintain, upon the unalterable principles of art—" At this they all burst into a roar, not sorry to shift the ridicule. "Goths!" cried Snarl, fiercely. "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen," cried Mr. Snarl, *avec intention,* "I have a criticism to write of last night's performance." The laugh died away to a quaver. "I shall sit on your pictures one day, Mr. Brush."

"Don't sit on them with your head downwards, or you'll addle them," said Mr. Brush, fiercely. This was the first time Triplet had ever answered a foe. Mrs. Woffington gave him an eloquent glance of encourage-

ment. He nodded his head in infantine exultation at what he had done.

"Come, Soaper," said Mr. Snarl.

"Mr. Soaper lingered one moment to say, "You shall always have my good word, Mr. Triplet."

"I will try—and not deserve it, Mr. Soaper," was the prompt reply.

"Serve 'em right," said Mr. Cibber, as soon as the door had closed upon them, "for a couple of serpents, or rather one boa-constrictor. Soaper slavers, for Snarl to crush. But we were all a little too hard on Triplet here; and if he will accept my apology—"

"Why, Sir," said Triplet, half-trembling, but driven on by looks from Mrs. Woffington, "'Cibber's Apology' is found to be a trifle wearisome."

"Confound his impertinence!" cried the astounded Laureate. "Come along, Jemmy."

"Oh, Sir!" said Quin, good humouredly, "we must give a joke and take a joke. And when he paints my portrait—which he shall do—"

"The bear from Hockley Hole shall sit for the head!"

"Curse his impudence!" roared Quin. "I'm at your service, Mr. Cibber," added he, in huge dudgeon.

Away went the two old boys.

"Mighty well!" said waspish Mrs. Clive. "I did intend you should have painted Mrs. Clive; but after this impertinence—"

"You will continue to do it yourself, Ma'am!"

This was Triplet's hour of triumph. His exultation was undignified, and such as is said to precede a fall. He inquired gravely of Mrs. Woffington whether he had, or had not shown a spirit; whether he had, or had not, fired into each a parting shot, as they sheered off,—to repair which, it might be advisable for them to put into friendly ports.

"Tremendous!" was the reply. "And when Snarl and

Soaper sit on your next play they won't forget the lesson you have given them."

"I'll be sworn they won't!" chuckled Triplet. But reconsidering her words, he looked blank, and muttered: "Then, perhaps, it would have been more prudent to let them alone!"

"Incalculably more prudent!" was the reply.

"Then, why did you set me on, Madam?" said Triplet, reproachfully.

"Because I wanted amusement, and my head ached," was the cool answer, somewhat languidly given.

"I defy the coxcombs!" cried Triplet, with reviving spirit. "But real criticism I respect, honour, and bow to,—such as yours, Madam; or such as that sweet lady's at Mr. Vane's would have been; or, in fact, anybody's who appreciates me. Oh! Madam, I wanted to ask you, was it not strange your not being at Mr. Vane's, after all, to-day?"

"I was at Mr. Vane's, Triplet."

"You were? Why, I came with my verses, and she said you were not there. I will go fetch the verses."

"No, no! Who said I was not there?"

"Did I not tell you? The charming young lady who helped me with her own hand to everything on the table. What wine that gentleman possesses!"

"Was it a young lady, Triplet?"

"Not more than two-'and-twenty, I should say."

"In a travelling dress?"

"I could not see her dress, Madam, for her beauty,—brown hair, blue eyes, charming in conversation—"

"Ah! What did she tell you?"

"She told me, Madam— Ahem!"

"Well, what did you tell her? And what did she answer?"

"I told her that I came with verses for you, ordered by Mr. Vane. That he admired you. I descanted,

Madam, on your virtues, which had made him your slave."

"Go on," said Mrs. Woffington, encouraging him with a deceitful smile. "Tell me all you told her."

"That you were sitting to me for your portrait, the destination of which was not doubtful. That I lived at 10 Hercules Building."

"You told that lady all this?"

"I give you my honour. She was so kind, I opened my heart to her. But tell me now, Madam," said Triplet, joyously dancing round the Woffington volcano, "do you know this charming lady?"

"Yes."

"I congratulate you, Madam. An acquaintance worthy even of you; and there are not many such. Who is she, Madam?" continued Triplet, lively with curiosity.

"Mrs. Vane," was the quiet, grim answer.

"Mrs. Vane? His mother? No—am I mad? His sister! Oh, I see, his—"

"His wife!"

"His wife! Why, then Mr. Vane's married?"

"Yes."

"Oh, look there!—oh, look here now! Well, but, good Heavens! she wasn't to know you were there, perhaps?"

"No."

"But then, I let the cat out of the bag?"

"Yes."

"But, good gracious! there will be some serious mischief!"

"No doubt of it."

"And it is all my fault?"

"Yes."

"I've played the deuce with their married happiness?"

"Probably."

"And, ten to one, if you are not incensed against me too?"

Mrs. Woffington replied by looking him in the face, and turning her back upon him. She walked hastily to the window, threw it open, and looked out of it, leaving poor Triplet to very unpleasant reflections. She was so angry with him she dared not trust herself to speak.

"Just my luck," thought he. "I had a patron and a benefactress; I have betrayed them both." Suddenly an idea struck him. "Madam," said he, timorously, "see what these fine gentlemen are! What business had he, with a wife at home, to come and fall in love with you? I do it for ever in my plays; I am obliged,—they would be so dull else; but in *real* life to do it is abominable."

"You forget, Sir," replied Mrs. Woffington, without moving, "that I am an actress,—a plaything for the impertinence of puppies and the treachery of hypocrites. Fool! to think there was an honest man in the world, and that he had shone on me!"

With these words she turned, and Triplet was shocked to see the change in her face. She was pale, and her black, louring brows were gloomy and terrible. She walked like a tigress to and fro, and Triplet dared not speak to her; indeed, she seemed but half-conscious of his presence. He went for nobody with her. How little we know the people we eat and go to church and flirt with! Triplet had imagined this creature an incarnation of gaiety, a sportive being, the daughter of smiles, the bride of mirth; needed but a look at her now to see that her heart was a volcano, her bosom a boiling gulf of fiery lava. She walked like some wild creature; she flung her hands up to heaven with a passionate despair, before which the feeble spirit of her companion shrank and cowered; and with quivering lips and blazing eyes, she burst into a torrent of passionate bitterness.

"But who is Margaret Woffington," she cried, "that she should pretend to honest love, or feel insulted by

the proffer of a stolen regard? And what have we to do with homes, or hearts, or firesides? Have we not the play-house, its paste diamonds, its paste feelings, and the loud applause of fops and sots? Hearts?—beneath loads of tinsel and paint? Nonsense! The love that can go with souls to heaven!—such love for us? Nonsense! These men applaud us, cajole us, swear to us, flatter us; and yet, forsooth, we would have them respect us, too."

"My dear benefactress," said Triplet, "they are not worthy of you."

"I thought this man was not all dross; from the first I never felt his passion an insult. Oh, Triplet! I could have loved this man,—really loved him! and I longed so to be good. Oh, God! oh God!"

"Thank heaven, you don't love him!" cried Triplet, hastily. "Thank heaven for that!"

"Love him? Love a man who comes to me with a silly second-hand affection from his insipid baby-face, and offers me half, or two thirds, or a third of his worthless heart? I hate him!—and her!—and all the world!"

"That is what I call a very proper feeling," said poor Triplet, with a weak attempt to soothe her. "Then break with him at once, and all will be well."

"Break with him? Are you mad? No! Since he plays with the tools of my trade I shall fool him, worse than he has me. I will feed his passion full, tempt him, torture him, play with him, as the angler plays a fish upon his hook. And when his very life depends on me, then by degrees he shall see me cool, and cool, and freeze into bitter aversion. Then he shall rue the hour he fought with the devil against my soul, and played false with a brain and heart like mine!"

"But his poor wife,—you will have pity on her?"

"His wife! Are wives' hearts the only hearts that throb, and burn, and break? His wife must

defend herself. It is not from me that mercy can come to her, nor from her to me. I loathe her; and I shall not forget that you took her part. Only, if you are her friend take my advice; don't you assist her. I shall defeat her without that. Let her fight *her* battle and *I* mine."

"Ah, Madam! she cannot fight,—she is a dove."

"You are a fool! What do you know about women? You were with her five minutes, and she turned you inside out. My life on it, whilst I have been fooling my time here, she is in the field, with all the arts of our sex, simplicity at the head of them."

Triplet was making a futile endeavour to convert her to his view of her rival, when a knock suddenly came to his door. A slovenly girl, one of his own neighbors, brought him a bit of paper, with a line written in pencil.

"'Tis from a lady, who waits below," said the girl.

Mrs. Woffington went again to the window, and there she saw getting out of a coach, and attended by James Burdock, Mabel Vane, who had sent up her name on the back of an old letter.

"What shall I do?" said Triplet, as soon as he recovered from the first stunning effects of this *contretemps*. To his astonishment, Mrs. Woffington bade the girl show the lady up stairs. The girl went down on this errand.

"But *you* are here," remonstrated Triplet. "Oh! to be sure, you can go into the other room. There is plenty of time to avoid her," said Triplet, in a very natural tremor. "This way, Madam!"

Mrs. Woffington stood in the middle of the room like a statue.

"What does she come here for?" said she, sternly. "You have not told me all."

"I don't know," cried poor Triplet, in dismay, "and I think the devil brings her here to confound me. For

Heaven's sake, retire! What will become of us all? There will be murder, I know there will!"

To his horror, Mrs. Woffington would not move. "You are on her side," said she, slowly, with a concentration of spite and suspicion. She looked frightful at this moment. "All the better for me," added she, with a world of female malignity.

Triplet could not make head against this blow; he gasped, and pointed piteously to the inner door. "No; I will know two things: the course she means to take, and the terms you two are upon."

By this time Mrs. Vane's light foot was heard on the stair, and Triplet sank into a chair. "They will tear one another to pieces," said he.

A tap came to the door.

He looked fearfully round for the woman whom jealousy had so speedily turned from an angel to a fiend, and saw with dismay that she had actually had the hardihood to slip around and enter the picture again. She had not quite arranged herself when her rival knocked.

Triplet dragged himself to the door. Before he opened it he looked fearfully over his shoulder, and received a glance of cool, bitter, deadly hostility that boded ill both for him and his visitor. Triplet's apprehensions were not unreasonable. His benefactress and this sweet lady were rivals!

Jealousy is a dreadful passion—it makes us tigers. The jealous always thirst for blood. At any moment, when reason is a little weaker than usual, they are ready to kill the thing they hate, or the thing they love.

Any open collision between these ladies would scatter ill consequences all round. Under such circumstances we are pretty sure to say or do something wicked, silly, or unreasonable. But what tortured Triplet more than anything was his own particular notion that fate doomed

him to witness a formal encounter between these two women; and of course an encounter of such a nature as we in our day illustrate by "Kilkenny cats."

To be sure, Mrs. Vane had appeared a dove, but doves can peck on certain occasions, and no doubt she had a spirit at bottom. Her coming to him proved it. And had not the other been a dove all the morning and afternoon? Yet jealousy had turned her to a fiend before his eyes. Then if (which was not probable) no collision took place, what a situation was his! Mrs. Woffington (his buckler from starvation) suspected him, and would distort every word that came from Mrs. Vane's lips.

Triplet's situation was, in fact, that of Æneas in the storm.

"Olim et hac meminisse juvabit—"

"But while present, such things don't please any one a bit."

It was the sort of situation we can laugh at and see the fun of it six months after, if not shipwrecked on it at the time.

With a ghastly smile the poor quaking hypocrite welcomed Mrs. Vane, and professed a world of innocent delight that she had so honoured his humble roof.

She interrupted his compliments, and begged him to see whether she was followed by a gentleman in a cloak.

Triplet looked out of the window.

"Sir Charles Pomander!" gasped he.

Sir Charles was at the very door. If, however, he had intended to mount the stairs he changed his mind, for he suddenly went off round the corner with a business-like air, real or fictitious.

"He is gone, Madam," said Triplet.

Mrs. Vane, the better to escape detection or observa-

tion, wore a thick mantle, and a hood that concealed her features. Of these Triplet debarrassed her.

"Sit down, Madam;" and he hastily drew a chair, so that her back was to the picture.

She was pale, and trembled a little. She hid her face in her hands a moment, then recovering her courage, she begged Mr. Triplet to pardon her for coming to him. He had inspired her with confidence, she said; he had offered her his services, and so she had come to him, for she had no other friend to aid her in her sore distress. She might have added that with the tact of her sex she had read Triplet to the bottom, and came to him as she would to a benevolent, muscular old woman.

Triplet's natural impulse was to repeat most warmly his offers of service. He did so; and then, conscious of the picture, had a misgiving.

"Dear Mr. Triplet," began Mrs. Vane, "you know this person, Mrs. Woffington?"

"Yes, Madam," replied Triplet, lowering his eyes, "I am honoured by her acquaintance."

"You will take me to the theatre where she acts?"

"Yes, Madam,—to the boxes, I presume?"

"No! oh, no! How could I bear that? To the place where the actors and actresses are."

Triplet demurred. This would be courting that very collision the dread of which even now oppressed him.

At the first faint sign of resistance she began to supplicate him, as if he was some great, stern tyrant.

"Oh, you must not, you cannot refuse me. You do not know what I risk to obtain this. I have risen from my bed to come to you. I have a fire here!" She pressed her hand to her brow. "Oh, take me to her!"

"Madam, I will do anything for you. But be advised; trust to my knowledge of human nature. What

you require is madness. Gracious Heavens! you two are rivals, and when rivals meet there's murder or deadly mischief."

"Ah, if you knew my sorrow you would not thwart me. Oh, Mr. Triplet! little did I think you were as cruel as the rest." So then this cruel monster whimpered out that he should do any folly she insisted upon. "Good, kind Mr. Triplet!" said Mrs. Vane. "Let me look in your face? Yes, I see you are honest and true. I will tell you all." Then she poured in his ear her simple tale, unadorned and touching as Judah's speech to Joseph. She told him how she loved her husband; how he had loved her; how happy they were for the first six months; how her heart sank when he left her; how he had promised she should join him, and on that hope she lived. "But for two months he had ceased to speak of this, and I grew heart-sick waiting for the summons that never came. At last I felt I should die if I did not see him; so I plucked up courage and wrote that I must come to him. He did not forbid me, so I left our country home. Oh, Sir! I cannot make you know how my heart burned to be by his side. I counted the hours of the journey; I counted the miles. At last I reached his house; I found a gay company there. I was a little sorry, but I said: 'His friends shall be welcome, right welcome. He has asked them to welcome his wife.'"

"Poor thing!" muttered Triplet.

"Oh, Mr. Triplet! they were there to do honour to——, and the wife was neither expected nor desired. There lay my letters with their seals unbroken. I know all *his* letters by heart, Mr. Triplet. The seals unbroken—unbroken Mr. Triplet!"

"It is abominable!" cried Triplet, fiercely.

"And she who sat in my seat—in his house, and in

his heart—was this lady, the actress you so praised to me!"

"That lady, Ma'am," said Triplet, "has been deceived as well as you."

"I am convinced of it," said Mabel.

"And it is my painful duty to tell you, Madam, that with all her talents and sweetness, she has a fiery temper,—yes, a very fiery temper," continued Triplet, stoutly, though with an uneasy glance in a certain direction; "and I have reason to believe she is angry, and thinks more of her own ill-usage than yours. Don't you go near her. Trust to my knowledge of the sex, Madam; I am a dramatic writer. Did you ever read the 'Rival Queens?' "

"No."

"I thought not. Well, Madam, one stabs the other, and the one that is stabbed says things to the other that are more biting than steel. The prudent course for you, is to keep apart, and be always cheerful, and welcome him with a smile, and— Have you read 'The Way to Keep Him?' "

"No, Mr. Triplet," said Mabel, firmly, "I cannot feign. Were I to attempt talent and deceit, I should be weaker than I am now. Honesty and right are all my strength. I will cry to her for justice and mercy. And if I cry in vain, I shall die, Mr. Triplet, that is all."

"Don't cry, dear lady," said Triplet, in a broken voice.

"It is impossible!" cried she, suddenly. "I am not learned, but I can read faces. I always could, and so could my Aunt Deborah before me. I read you right, Mr. Triplet, and I have read her too. Did not my heart warm to her amongst them all? There *is* a heart at the bottom of all her acting, and that heart is good and noble."

"She is, Madam! she is!—and charitable too. I know a family she saved from starvation and despair. Oh, yes! she has a heart,—to feel for the *poor* at all events."

"And am not I the poorest of the poor?" cried Mrs. Vane. "I have no father nor mother, Mr. Triplet; my husband is all I have in the world—all I *had*, I mean."

Triplet, deeply affected himself, stole a look at Mrs. Woffington. She was pale; but her face was composed into a sort of dogged obstinacy. He was disgusted with her. "Madam," said he, sternly, "there is a wild beast more cruel and savage than wolves and bears; it is called 'a rival,' and don't you get in its way."

At this moment, in spite of Triplet's precaution, Mrs. Vane, casting her eye accidentally round, caught sight of the picture, and instantly started up, crying, "She is there!" Triplet was thunderstruck. "What a likeness!" cried she, and moved towards the supposed picture.

"Don't go to it!" cried Triplet, aghast; "the colour is wet."

She stopped; but her eye and her very soul dwelt upon the supposed picture, and Triplet stood quaking. "How like! It seems to breathe. You are a great painter, Sir. A glass is not truer."

Triplet, hardly knowing what he said, muttered something about critics, and lights, and shades.

"Then they are blind!" cried Mabel, never for a moment removing her eye from the object. "Tell me not of lights and shades. The pictures I see have a look of paint; but yours looks like life. Oh that she were here, as this *wonderful* image of hers is! I would speak to her. I am not wise or learned; but orators never pleaded as I would plead to her for my Ernest's

heart." Still her eye glanced upon the picture, and, I suppose her heart realized an actual presence, though her judgment did not; for by some irresistible impulse she sank slowly down and stretched her clasped hands towards it, while sobs and words seemed to break direct from her bursting heart. "Oh, yes! you are beautiful, you are gifted, and the eyes of thousands wait upon your every word and look. What wonder that he, ardent, refined, and genial, should lay his heart at your feet? And I have nothing but my love to make him love me. I cannot take him from you. Oh, be generous to the weak! oh, give him back to me! What is one heart more to you? You are so rich! and I am so poor that without his love I have nothing, and can do nothing but sit me down and cry till my heart breaks. Give him back to me, beautiful, terrible woman! for, with all your gifts, you cannot love him as his poor Mabel does; and I will love you longer perhaps than men can love. I will kiss your feet, and Heaven above will bless you; and I will bless you and pray for you to my dying day. Ah! it is alive! I am frightened! I am frightened!" She ran to Triplet and seized his arm. "No!" cried she, quivering close to him; "I'm not frightened, for it was for me she— Oh, Mrs. Woffington!" and hiding her face on Mr. Triplet's shoulder, she blushed, and wept, and trembled.

What was it had betrayed Mrs. Woffington? A *tear!*

During the whole of this interview (which had taken a turn so unlooked for by the listener) she might have said with Beatrice, "What fire is in mine ears?" and what self-reproach and chill misgiving in her heart too. She had passed through a hundred emotions as the young innocent wife told her sad and simple story. But anxious now above all things to escape without

being recognised,—for she had long repented having listened at all, or placed herself in her present position,—she fiercely mastered her countenance; but though she ruled her features, she could not rule her heart. And when the young wife, instead of inveighing against her, came to her as a supplicant, with faith in her goodness, and sobbed to her for pity, a big tear rolled down her cheek, and proved her something more than a picture of an actress.

Mrs. Vane, as we have related, screamed and ran to Triplet.

Mrs. Woffington came instantly from her frame, and stood before them in a despairing attitude, with one hand upon her brow. For a single moment her impulse was to fly from the apartment, so ashamed was she of having listened, and of meeting her rival in this way; but she conquered this feeling, and as soon as she saw Mrs. Vane too had recovered some composure she said to Triplet, in a low but firm voice:—

"Leave us, Sir. No living creature must hear what I say to this lady!"

Triplet remonstrated, but Mrs. Vane said, faintly:—

"Oh, yes, good Mr. Triplet, I would rather you left me."

Triplet, full of misgivings, was obliged to retire.

"Be composed, ladies," said he, piteously. "Neither of you could help it;" and so he entered his inner room, where he sat and listened nervously, for he could not shake off all apprehension of a personal encounter.

In the room he had left there was a long, uneasy silence. Both ladies were greatly embarrassed. It was the actress who spoke first. All trace of emotion, except a certain pallor, was driven from her face. She spoke with very marked courtesy, but in tones that seemed to freeze as they dropped one by one from her mouth.

"I trust, Madam, you will do me the justice to believe I did not know Mr. Vane was married?"

"I am sure of it!" said Mabel, warmly. "I feel you are as good as you are gifted."

"Mrs. Vane, I am not!" said the other, almost sternly. "You are deceived!"

"Then Heaven have mercy on me! No! I am not deceived, you pitied me. You speak coldly now; but I know your face and your heart,—you pity me!"

"I do respect, admire, and pity you," said Mrs. Woffington, sadly; "and I could consent never more to communicate with your—with Mr. Vane."

"Ah," cried Mabel. "Heaven will bless you! But will you give me back his heart?"

"How can I do that?" said Mrs. Woffington, uneasily; she had not bargained for this.

"The magnet can repel as well as attract. Can you not break your own spell? What will his presence be to me if his heart remain behind?"

"You ask much of me."

"Alas! I do."

"But I could do even this." She paused for breath. "And perhaps if you, who have not only touched my heart but won my respect, were to say to me, 'Do so,' I should do it. Again she paused, and spoke with difficulty; for the bitter struggle took away her breath. "Mr. Vane thinks better of me than I deserve. I have—only—to make him believe me—worthless—worse than I am—and he will drop me like an adder, and love you better, far better, for having known, admired, and despised Margaret Woffington."

"Oh!" cried Mabel, "I shall bless you every hour of my life." Her countenance brightened into rapture at the picture, and Mrs. Woffington's darkened with bitterness as she watched her.

But Mabel reflected. "Rob you of your good name?"

said this pure creature. "Ah, Mabel Vane! you think but of yourself!"

"I thank you, Madam," said Mrs. Woffington, a little touched by this unexpected trait; "but some one must suffer here, and—"

Mabel Vane interrupted her. "This would be cruel and base," said she, firmly. "No woman's forehead shall be soiled by me. Oh, Madam! beauty is admired, talent is adored; but virtue is a woman's crown. With it, the poor are rich; without it, the rich are poor. It walks through life upright, and never hides its head for high or low."

Her face was as the face of an angel now; and the actress, conquered by her beauty and her goodness, actually bowed her head and gently kissed the hand of the country wife whom she had quizzed a few hours ago.

Frailty paid this homage to virtue!

Mabel Vane hardly noticed it; her eye was lifted to heaven, and her heart was gone there for help in a sore struggle.

"This would be to assassinate you,—no less. And so, Madam," she sighed, "with God's help, I do refuse your offer; choosing rather, if needs be, to live desolate, but innocent,—many a better than I hath lived so,—ay! if God wills it, to die, with my hopes and my heart crushed, but my hands unstained; for so my humble life has passed."

How beautiful, great, and pure goodness is. It paints heaven on the face that has it; it wakens the sleeping souls that meet it.

At the bottom of Margaret Woffington's heart lay a soul, unknown to the world, scarce known to herself,—a heavenly harp, on which ill airs of passion had been played, but still it was there, in tune with all that is true, pure, really great and good. And now the flush that a

great heart sends to the brow, to herald great actions, came to her cheek and brow.

"Humble!" she cried. "Such as you are the diamonds of our race. You angel of truth and goodness, you have conquered!"

"Oh, yes! yes! Thank God, yes!"

"What a fiend I must be could I injure you! The poor heart we have both overrated shall be yours again, and yours forever. In my hands it is painted glass; in the lustre of a love like yours it may become a priceless jewel." She turned her head away and pondered a moment, then suddenly offered to Mrs. Vane her hand with nobleness and majesty. "Can you trust me?" The actress too was divinely beautiful now, for her good angel shone through her.

"I could trust you with my life!" was the reply.

"Ah! if I might call you friend, dear lady, what would I not do—suffer—resign—to be worthy that title!"

"No, not friend!" cried the warm, innocent Mabel; "sister! I will call you sister. I have no sister."

"Sister!" said Mrs. Woffington. "Oh, do not mock me! Alas! you do not know what you say. That sacred name to me, from lips so pure as yours— Mrs. Vane," said she, timidly, "would you think me presumptuous if I begged you to—to let me kiss you?"

The words were scarce spoken before Mrs. Vane's arms were wreathed round her neck, and that innocent cheek laid sweetly to hers.

Mrs. Woffington strained her to her bosom, and two great hearts, whose grandeur the world, worshipper of charlatans, never discovered, had found each other out and beat against each other. A great heart is as quick to find another out as the world is slow.

Mrs. Woffington burst into a passion of tears and clasped Mabel tighter and tighter, in a half-despairing

way. Mabel mistook the cause, but she kissed her tears away.

"Dear sister," said she, "be comforted. I love you. My heart warmed to you the first moment I saw you. A woman's love and gratitude are something. Ah! you will never find me change. This is for life, look you."

"God grant it!" cried the other poor woman. "Oh, it is not that, it is not that; it is because I am so little worthy of this. It is a sin to deceive you. I am not good like you. You do not know me!"

"You do not know yourself if you say so!" cried Mabel; and to her hearer the words seemed to come from heaven. "I read faces," said Mabel. "I read yours at sight, and you are what I set you down; and nobody must breathe a word against you, not even yourself. Do you think I am blind? You are beautiful, you are good, you are my sister, and I love you!"

"Heaven forgive me!" thought the other. "How can I resign this angel's good opinion? Surely Heaven sends this blessed dew to my parched heart!" And now she burned to make good her promise, and earn this virtuous wife's love. She folded her once more in her arms, and then taking her by the hand, led her tenderly into Triplet's inner room. She made her lie down on the bed, and placed pillows high for her like a mother, and leaned over as she lay, and pressed her lips gently to her forehead. Her fertile brain had already digested a plan, but she had resolved that this pure and candid soul should take no lessons of deceit. "Lie there," said she, "till I open the door, and then join us. Do you know what I am going to do? I am not going to restore you your husband's heart, but to show you it never really left you. You read faces; well I read circumstances. Matters are not as you thought," said she, with all a woman's tact. "I cannot explain, but you will see." She then gave Mrs. Triplet peremptory orders not to

let her charge rise from the bed until the preconcerted signal.

Mrs. Vane was, in fact, so exhausted by all she had gone through that she was in no condition to resist. She cast a look of childlike confidence upon her rival, and then closed her eyes, and tried not to tremble all over and listen like a frightened hare.

It is one great characteristic of genius to do great things with little things. Paxton could see that so small a matter as a greenhouse could be dilated into a crystal palace, and with two common materials—glass and iron—he raised the palace of the genii,—the brightest idea and the noblest ornament added to Europe in this century,—the koh-i-nor of the West. Livy's definition of Archimedes goes on the same ground.

Peg Woffington was a genius in her way. On entering Triplet's studio her eye fell upon three trifles,—Mrs. Vane's hood and mantle, the back of an old letter, and Mr. Triplet. It will be seen how she worked these slight materials. On the letter was written, in pencil, simply these two words, "Mabel Vane." Mrs. Woffington wrote above these words two more, "Alone and unprotected." She put this into Mr. Triplet's hand, and bade him take it downstairs and give it Sir Charles Pomander, whose retreat she knew must have been fictitious. "You will find him round the corner," said she, "or in some shop that looks this way." Whilst uttering these words she had put on Mrs. Vane's hood and mantle.

No answer was returned, and no Triplet went out of the door.

She turned, and there he was, kneeling on both knees close under her.

"Bid me jump out of that window, Madam; bid me kill those two gentlemen, and I will not rebel. You are a great lady, a talented lady; you have been insulted,

and no doubt blood will flow. It ought,—it is your due; but that innocent lady, do not compromise her!"

"Oh, Mr. Triplet, you need not kneel to me. I do not wish to force you to render me a service. I have no right to dictate to you."

"Oh, dear!" cried Triplet, "don't talk in that way. I owe you my life, but I think of your own peace of mind, for you are not one to be happy if you injure the innocent!" He rose suddenly, and cried: "Madam, promise me not to stir till I come back!"

"Where are you going?"

"To bring the husband to his wife's feet, and so save one angel from despair, and another angel from a great crime."

"Well, I suppose you are wiser than I," said she. "But if you are in earnest you had better be quick, for somehow I am rather changeable about these people."

"You can't help that, Madam, it is your sex; you are an angel. May I be permitted to kiss your hand? you are all goodness and gentleness at bottom. I fly to Mr. Vane, and we will be back before you have time to repent, and give the devil the upper hand again, my dear, good, sweet lady!"

Away flew Triplet, all unconscious that he was not Mrs. Woffington's opponent, but puppet. He ran, he tore, animated by a good action, and spurred by the notion that he was in direct competition with the fiend for the possession of his benefactress.

He had no sooner turned the corner than Mrs. Woffington, looking out of the window, observed Sir Charles Pomander on the watch, as she had expected. She remained at the window with Mrs. Vane's Hood on, until Sir Charles's eye in its wanderings lighted on her, and then dropping Mrs. Vane's letter from the window she hastily withdrew.

Sir Charles eagerly picked it up. His eye brightened

when he read the short contents. With a self-satisfied smile he mounted the stair. He found in Triplet's house a lady, who seemed startled at her late hardihood. She sat with her back to the door, her hood drawn tightly down, and wore an air of trembling consciousness. Sir Charles smiled again. He knew the sex,—at least, he said so. (It is an assertion often ventured upon.) Accordingly, Sir Charles determined to come down from his height and court nature and innocence in their tones. This he rightly judged must be the proper course to take with Mrs. Vane. He fell down with mock ardour upon one knee.

The supposed Mrs. Vane gave a little squeak.

"Dear Mrs. Vane," cried he, "be not alarmed; loveliness neglected, and simplicity deceived, insure respect as well as adoration. Ah!" (a sigh.)

"Oh, get up, Sir; do, please. Ah!" (a sigh.)

"You sigh, sweetest of human creatures. Ah! why did not a nature like yours fall into hands that would have cherished it as it deserves? Had Heaven bestowed on me this hand, which I take—'

"Oh, please, Sir—"

"—with the profoundest respect, would I have abandoned such a treasure for an actress, a Woffington?—as artificial and hollow a jade as ever winked at a side box!"

"Is she, Sir?"

"Notorious, Madam. Your husband is the only man in London who does not see through her. How different are you! Even I, who have no taste for actresses, found myself revived, refreshed, ameliorated by that engaging picture of innocence and virtue you drew this morning,—yourself the bright and central figure. Ah, dear angel! I remember all your favourites, and envy them their place in your recollections. Your Barbary mare—"

"Hen, Sir!"

"Of course, I meant hen; and Grey Gillian, his old nurse—"

"No, no, no! she is the mare, Sir. He! he! he!"

"So she is. And Dame—Dame—"

"Best!"

"Ah! I knew it. You see how I remember them all. And all carry me back to those innocent days which fleet too soon,—days when an angel like you might have weaned me from the wicked pleasures of the town to the placid delights of a rural existence!"

"Alas, Sir!"

"You sigh. It is not yet too late. I am a convert to you. I swear it on this white hand. Ah! how can I relinquish it, pretty, fluttering prisoner?"

"Oh, Sir, please—"

"Stay awhile."

"No! please, Sir—"

"While I fetter thee with a worthy manacle." Sir Charles slipped a diamond ring of great value upon his pretty prisoner.

"La, Sir, how pretty!" cried innocence.

Sir Charles then undertook to prove that the lustre of the ring was faint compared with that of the present wearer's eyes. This did not suit innocence; she hung her head and fluttered, and showed a bashful repugnance to look her admirer in the face. Sir Charles playfully insisted, and Mrs. Woffington was beginning to be a little at a loss, when suddenly voices were heard upon the stairs.

"*My husband!*" cried the false Mrs. Vane, and in a moment she rose and darted into Triplet's inner apartment.

Mr. Vane and Mr. Triplet were talking earnestly as they came up the stair. It seems the wise Triplet had prepared a little dramatic scene for his own refreshment,

as well as for the ultimate benefit of all parties. He had persuaded Mr. Vane to accompany him by warm, mysterious promises of a happy *dénouement;* and now, having conducted that gentleman as far as his door, he was heard to say:—

"And, now, Sir, you shall see one who waits to forget grief, suspicion—all, in your arms. Behold!" and here he flung the door open.

"The devil!"

"You flatter me!" said Pomander, who had had time to recover his *aplomb*, somewhat shaken at first by Mr. Vane's inopportune arrival.

Now it is to be observed that Mr. Vane had not long ago seen his wife lying on her bed, to all appearance incapable of motion.

Mr. Vane, before Triplet could recover his surprise, inquired of Pomander why he had sent for him. "And what," added he, "is the grief—suspicion, I am, according to Mr. Triplet, to forget in your arms?"

Mr. Vane added this last sentence in rather a testy manner.

"Why, the fact is—" began Sir Charles, without the remotest idea of what the fact was going to be.

"That Sir Charles Pomander—" interrupted Triplet.

"But Mr. Triplet is going to explain," said Sir Charles, keenly.

"Nay, Sir; be yours the pleasing duty. But now I think of it," resumed Triplet, "why not tell the simple truth?—it is not a play! She I brought you here to see was not Sir Charles Pomander, but—"

"I forbid you to complete the name!" cried Pomander.

"I command you to complete the name!" cried Vane.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, how can I do both?" remonstrated Triplet.

"Enough, Sir!" cried Pomander. "It is a lady's secret. I am the guardian of that lady's honour."

"She has chosen a strange guardian of her honour!" said Vane, bitterly.

"Gentlemen!" cried poor Triplet, who did not at all like the turn things were taking, "I give you my word, she does not even know of Sir Charles's presence here."

"Who?" cried Vane, furiously. "Man alive! who are you speaking of?"

"Mrs. Vane!"

"My wife!" cried Vane, trembling with anger and jealousy. "She here!—and with this man?"

"No!" cried Triplet. "With me, with me! Not with him, of course."

"Boaster!" cried Vane, contemptuously. "But that is a part of your profession."

Pomander, irritated, scornfully drew from his pocket the ladies' joint production, which had fallen at his feet from Mrs. Woffington's hand. He presented this to Mr. Vane, who took it very uneasily; a mist swam before his eyes as he read the words: "Alone and unprotected—Mabel Vane." He had no sooner read these words than he found he loved his wife; when he tampered with his treasure he did not calculate on another seeking it.

This was Pomander's hour of triumph! He proceeded coolly to explain that, Mrs. Woffington having deserted him for Mr. Vane, and Mr. Vane his wife for Mrs. Woffington, the bereaved parties had, according to custom, agreed to console each other.

This soothing little speech was interrupted by Mr. Vane's sword flashing suddenly out of its sheath, while that gentleman, white with rage and jealousy, bade him instantly take to his guard, or be run through the body like some noxious animal.

Sir Charles drew his sword, and in spite of Triplet's weak interference, half a dozen passes were rapidly exchanged, when suddenly the door of the inner room opened, and a lady in a hood pronounced, in a voice

which was an excellent imitation of Mrs. Vane's, the word "False!"

The combatants lowered their points.

"You hear, Sir!" cried Triplet.

"You see, Sir!" said Pomander.

"Mabel!—wife!" cried Mr. Vane, in agony. "Oh! say this is not true!—oh! say that letter is a forgery! Say, at least, it was by some treachery you were lured to this den of iniquity! Oh, speak!"

The lady silently beckoned to some person inside.

"You know I loved you!—you know how bitterly I repent the infatuation that brought me to the feet of another!"

The lady replied not, though Vane's soul appeared to hang upon her answer. But she threw the door open, and there appeared another lady, the real Mrs. Vane. Mrs. Woffington then threw off her hood, and to Sir Charles Pomander's consternation, revealed the features of that ingenious person who seemed born to outwit him.

"You heard that fervent declaration, Madam?" said she to Mrs. Vane. "I present to you, Madam, a gentleman who regrets that he mistook the real direction of his feelings. And to you, Sir," continued she, with great dignity, "I present a lady who will never mistake either her feelings or her duty."

"Ernest! dear Ernest!" cried Mrs. Vane, blushing, as if she was the culprit. And she came forward, all love and tenderness.

Her truant husband kneeled at her feet, of course. No! he said, rather sternly, "How came you here, Mabel?"

"Mrs. Vane," said the actress, "fancied you had mislaid that weathercock, your heart, in Covent Garden, and that an actress had seen in it a fit companion for her own, and had feloniously appropriated it. She came to me to inquire after it."

"But this letter, signed by you?" said Vane, still addressing Mabel.

"Was written by me on a paper which accidentally contained Mrs. Vane's name. The fact is, Mr. Vane,—I can hardly look you in the face,—I had a little wager with Sir Charles here; his diamond ring—which you may see has become my diamond ring—" a horribly wry face from Sir Charles—"against my left glove, that I could bewitch a country gentleman's imagination, and make him think me an angel. Unfortunately, the owner of his heart appeared, and like poor Mr. Vane, took our play for earnest. It became necessary to disabuse her and to open your eyes. Have I done so?"

"You have, Madam," said Vane, wincing at each word she said. But at last, by a mighty effort, he mastered himself, and coming to Mrs. Woffington with a quivering lip, he held out his hand suddenly in a very manly way. "I have been the dupe of my own vanity," said he, "and I thank you for this lesson." Poor Mrs. Woffington's fortitude had well-nigh left her at this.

"Mabel," he cried, "is this humiliation any punishment for my folly; any guarantee for my repentance? Can you forgive me?"

"It is all forgiven, Ernest. But, oh! you are mistaken." She glided to Mrs. Woffington. "What do we not owe you, sister?" whispered she.

"Nothing! that word pays all," was the reply. She then slipped her address into Mrs. Vane's hand, and curtseying to all the company, she hastily left the room.

Sir Charles Pomander followed, but he was not quick enough; she got a start, and purposely avoided him; and for three days neither the public nor private friends saw this poor woman's face.

Mr. and Mrs. Vane prepared to go also; but Mrs. Vane would thank good Mr. Triplet and Mrs. Triplet for their kindness to her.

Triplet, the benevolent, blushed, was confused and delighted; but suddenly turning somewhat sorrowful, he said: "Mr. Vane, Madam, made use of an expression which caused a momentary pang. He called this a den of iniquity. Now this is my studio! But never mind."

Mr. Vane asked his pardon for so absurd an error, and the pair left Triplet in all the enjoyment which does come now and then to an honest man, whether this dirty little world will or not.

A coach was called, and they went home to Bloomsbury. Few words were said; but the repentant husband often silently pressed this angel to his bosom, and the tears which found their way to her beautiful eyelashes were tears of joy.

This weakish, and consequently villainous, though not ill-disposed person would have gone down to Willoughby that night; but his wife had great good sense. She would not take her husband off, like a schoolboy caught out of bounds. She begged him to stay while she made certain purchases; but for all that, her heart burned to be at home. So in less than a week after the events we have related they left London.

Meantime, every day Mrs. Vane paid a quiet visit to Mrs. Woffington (for some days the actress admitted no other visitor), and was with her but two hours before she left London. On that occasion she found her very sad.

"I shall never see you again in this world," said she; "but I beg of you to write to me, that my mind may be in contact with yours."

She then asked Mabel, in her half-sorrowful, half-bitter way, how many months it would be ere she was forgotten?

Mabel answered by quietly crying. So then they embraced; and Mabel assured her friend she was not

one of those who change their minds. "It is for life, dear sister; it is for life," cried she.

"Swear this to me," said the other, almost sternly. "But no. I have more confidence in that candid face and pure nature than in a human being's oath. If you are happy, remember you owe me something. If you are unhappy, come to me, and I will love you as men cannot love."

Then vows passed between them, for a singular tie bound these two women; and then the actress showed a part at least of her sore heart to her new sister; and that sister was surprised and grieved, and pitied her truly and deeply, and they wept on each other's neck; and at last they were fain to part. They parted; and true it was, they never met again in this world. They parted in sorrow; but when they meet again, it shall be with joy.

Women are generally such faithless, unscrupulous, and pitiless humbugs in their dealings with their own sex—which, whatever they may say, they despise at heart—that I am happy to be able to say Mrs. Vane proved as true as steel. She was a noble-minded, simple-minded creature; she was also a constant creature. Constancy is a rare, a beautiful, a God-like virtue.

Four times every year she wrote a long letter to Mrs. Woffington; and twice a year, in the cold weather, she sent her a hamper of country delicacies, that would have victualled a small garrison. And when her sister left this earthly scene—a humble, pious, long-repentant Christian—Mrs. Vane wore mourning for her, and sorrowed over her; but not as those who cannot hope to meet again.

My story as a work of art—good, bad, or indifferent—ends with that last sentence. If a reader accompanies me farther, I shall feel flattered, and he does so at his own risk.

My reader knows that all this befel long ago; that Woffington is gay, and Triplet sad no more; that Mabel's, and all the bright eyes of that day have long been dim, and all its cunning voices hushed. Judge, then, whether I am one of those happy story-tellers who can end with a wedding. No! this story must wind up, as yours and mine must to-morrow, or to-morrow, or to-morrow,—when our little sand is run.

Sir Charles Pomander lived a man of pleasure until sixty. He then became a man of pain; he dragged the chain about eight years, and died miserably.

Mr. Cibber not so much died as "slipped his wind,"—a nautical expression, that conveys the idea of an easy exit. He went off quiet and genteel. He was past eighty, and had lived fast. His servant called him at seven in the morning. "I will shave at eight," said Mr. Cibber. John brought the hot water at eight; but his master had taken the advantage of this interval in his toilette to die!—to avoid shaving?

Snarl and Soaper conducted the criticism of their day with credit and respectability until a good old age, and died placidly a natural death, like twaddle, sweet or sour.

The Triplets, while their patroness lived, did pretty well. She got a tragedy of his accepted at her theatre. She made him send her a copy, and with her scissors cut out about half; sometimes thinning, sometimes cutting bodily away. But lo! the inherent vanity of Mr. Triplet came out strong. Submissively, but obstinately, he fought for the discarded beauties. Unluckily, he did this one day that his patroness was in one of her bitter humours. So she instantly gave him back his manuscript, with a sweet smile owned herself inferior in judgment to him, and left him unmolested.

Triplet breathed freely; a weight was taken off him. The savage steel (he applied this title to the actress's

scissors) had spared his *purpurei panni.* He was played pure and intact, a calamity the rest of us grumbling escape.

But it did so happen that the audience were of the actress's mind, and found the words too exuberant, and the business of the play too scanty in proportion. At last their patience was so sorely tried that they supplied one striking incident to a piece deficient in facts. They gave the manager the usual broad hint, and in the middle of Triplet's third act a huge veil of green baize descended upon "The Jealous Spaniard."

Failing here, Mrs. Woffington contrived often to befriend him in his other arts, and moreover she often sent Mr. Triplet, what she called a snug investment, a loan of ten pounds, to be repaid at Doomsday, with interest and compound interest, according to the Scriptures; and although she laughed, she secretly believed she was to get her ten pounds back, double and treble. And I believe so too.

Some years later Mrs. Triplet became eventful. She felt ill, and lay a-dying; but one fine morning, after all hope had been given up, she suddenly rose and dressed herself. She was quite well in body now, but insane.

She continued in this state a month, and then by God's mercy she recovered her reason; but now the disease fell another step, and lighted upon her temper,—a more athletic vixen was not to be found. She had spoiled Triplet for this by being too tame, so when the dispensation came they sparred daily. They were now thoroughly unhappy. They were as poor as ever, and their benefactress was dead, and they had learned to snap. A speculative tour had taken this pair to Bristol, then the second city in England. They sojourned in the suburbs.

One morning the postman brought a letter for Triplet, who was showing his landlord's boy how to plant onions.

(N. B. Triplet had never planted an onion, but he was one of your *à priori* gentlemen, and could show anybody how to do anything.) Triplet held out his hand for the letter, but the postman held out his hand for half a crown first. Trip's profession had transpired, and his clothes inspired diffidence. Triplet appealed to his good feeling.

He replied, with exultation, that he had none left. (A middle-aged postman, no doubt.)

Triplet then suddenly started from entreaty to King Cambyses' vein. In vain?

Mrs. Triplet came down, and essayed the blandishments of the softer sex. In vain! And as there were no assets, the postman marched off down the road.

Mrs. Triplet glided after him like an assassin, beckoning on Triplet, who followed, doubtful of her designs. Suddenly (truth compels me to relate this) she seized the obdurate official from behind, pinned both his arms to his side and with her nose furiously telegraphed her husband.

He, animated by her example, plunged upon the man and tore the letter from his hand, and opened it before his eyes.

It happened to be a very windy morning, and when he opened the letter an enclosure, printed on much finer paper, was caught into the air, and went down the wind. Triplet followed in kangaroo leaps, like a dancer making a flying exit.

The postman cried on all good citizens for help. Some collected and laughed at him,—Mrs. Triplet explaining that they were poor, and could not pay half a crown for the freight of half an ounce of paper. She held him convulsively until Triplet reappeared.

That gentleman, on his return, was ostentatiously calm and dignified. "You are, or were, in perturbation about half a crown," said he. "There, Sir, is a twenty-pound

note; oblige me with nineteen pounds, seventeen shillings and sixpence. Should your resources be unequal to such a demand, meet me at the Green Cat and Brown Frogs, after dinner, when you shall receive your half-crown, and drink another upon the occasion of my sudden accession to unbounded affluence."

The postman was staggered by the sentence, and overawed by the note, and chose the Cat and Frogs, and liquid half-crown.

Triplet took his wife down the road and showed her the letter and enclosure. The letter ran thus:—

"Sir,—We beg respectfully to inform you that our late friend and client, James Triplet, merchant, of the Minories, died last August, without a will, and that you are his heir.

"His property amounts to about twenty thousand pounds, besides some reversions. Having possessed the confidence of your late uncle, we should feel honoured and gratified if you should think us worthy to act professionally for yourself.

"We enclose twenty pounds, and beg you will draw upon us as far as five thousand pounds, should you have immediate occasion.

"We are, Sir,
"Your humble servants,
"James and John Allmitt."

It was some time before these children of misfortune could realize this enormous stroke of compensation; but at last it worked its way into their spirits, and they began to sing to triumph, and dance upon the king's highway.

Mrs. Triplet was the first to pause, and take better views. "Oh, James!" she cried, "we have suffered much! we have been poor, but honest, and the Almighty has looked upon us at last!"

Then they began to reproach themselves.

"Oh, James! I have been a peevish woman,—an ill wife to you, this many years!"

"No, no!" cried Triplet, with tears in his eyes. "It is I who have been rough and brutal. Poverty tried us too hard; but we were not like the rest of them,—we were always faithful to the altar. And the Almighty has seen us, though we often doubted it."

"I never doubted that, James."

So then the poor things fell on their knees upon the public road, and thanked God. If any man had seen them, he would have said they were mad. Yet madder things are done every day by gentlemen with faces as grave as the parish bull's. And then they rose, and formed their little plans.

Triplet was for devoting four fifths to charity, and living like a prince on the remainder. But Mrs. Triplet thought the poor were entitled to no more than two thirds, and they themselves ought to bask in a third, to make up for what they had gone through; and then suddenly she sighed, and burst into tears. "Lucy! Lucy!" sobbed she.

Yes, reader, God had taken little Lucy! And her mother cried to think all this wealth and comfort had come too late for her darling child.

"Do not cry. Lucy is richer, a thousand times, than you are, with your twenty thousand pounds."

Their good resolutions were carried out, for a wonder. Triplet lived for years, the benefactor of all the loose fish that swim in and round theatres; and indeed the unfortunate seldom appealed to him in vain. He now predominated over the arts, instead of climbing them. In his latter day he became an oracle, as far as the science of acting was concerned; and, what is far more rare, he really got to know *something* about it. This was owing to two circumstances: first, he ceased to run

blindfold in a groove behind the scenes; second, he became a frequenter of the first row of the pit, and that is where the whole critic, and two thirds of the true actor, is made.

On one point, to his dying day, his feelings guided his judgment. He never could see an actress equal to his Woffington. Mrs. Abington was grace personified, but so was Woffington, said the old man. And Abington's voice is thin, Woffington's was sweet and mellow. When Jordan rose, with her voice of honey, her dewy freshness, and her heavenly laugh that melted in along with her words like the gold in a quartz, Triplet was obliged to own her the goddess of beautiful gaiety; but still he had the last word: "Woffington was all *she* is, except her figure. Woffington was a Hebe; your Nell Jordan is little better than a dowdy."

Triplet almost reached the present century. He passed through great events, but they did not excite him,—his eye was upon the arts. When Napoleon drew his conquering sword on England, Triplet's remark was: "Now we shall be driven upon native talent, thank Heaven!" The storms of Europe shook not Triplet. The fact is, nothing that happened on the great stage of the world seemed real to him. He believed in nothing where there was no curtain visible. But even the grotesque are not good in vain. Many an eye was wet round his dying-bed, and many a tear fell upon his grave. He made his final exit in the year of grace 1799. And I, who laugh at him, would leave this world to-day, to be with him; for I am tossing at sea—he is in port.

A straightforward character like Mabel's becomes a firm character with years. Long ere she was forty her hand gently but steadily ruled Willoughby House—and all in it. She and Mr. Vane lived very happily; he gave her no fresh cause for uneasiness. Six months

after their return she told him, what burned in that honest heart of hers, the truth about Mrs. Woffington. The water rushed to his eyes, but his heart was now wholly his wife's, and gratitude to Mrs. Woffington for her noble conduct was the only sentiment awakened.

"You must repay her, dearest," said he. "I know you love her, and until to-day it gave me pain; now it gives me pleasure. We owe her much."

The happy, innocent life of Mabel Vane is soon summed up. Frank as the day, constant as the sun, pure as the dew, she passed the golden years preparing herself and others for a still brighter eternity. At home, it was she who warmed and cheered the house, and the hearth, more than all the Christmas fires. Abroad, she shone upon the poor like the sun. She led her beloved husband by the hand to heaven; she led her children the same road; and she was leading her grandchildren when the angel of death came for her,—and she slept in peace.

Many remember her. For she alone, of all our tale, lived in this present century; but they speak of her as "old Madame Vane,"—her whom we knew so young and fresh.

She lies in Willoughby Church,—her mortal part; her spirit is with the spirits of our mothers and sisters, reader, that are gone before us; with the tender mothers, the chaste wives, the loyal friends, and the just women of all ages.

RESURGET.

I come to her last who went first; but I could not have stayed by the others when once I had laid my darling asleep. It seemed for a while as if the events of our tale did her harm; but it was not so in the end.

Not many years afterwards she was engaged by Mr. Sheridan, at a very heavy salary, and went to Dublin.

Here the little girl who had often carried a pitcher on her head down to the Liffey, and had played Polly Peachum in a booth, became a lion,—dramatic, political, and literary,—and the centre of the wit of that wittiest of cities.

But the Dublin ladies and she did not coalesce. They said she was a naughty woman, and not fit for them morally. She said they had but two topics, "silks and scandal," and were unfit for her intellectually.

This was the saddest part of her history. But it is darkest just before sunrise. She returned to London. Not long after, it so happened that she went to a small church in the city one Sunday afternoon. The preacher was such as we have often heard; but not so this poor woman, in her day of sapless theology, ere John Wesley waked the snoring church. Instead of sending a dry clatter of morality about their ears, or evaporating the Bible in the thin generalities of the pulpit, this man drove God's truths home to the hearts of men and women. In his hands the divine virtues were thunderbolts, not swan's-down. With good sense, plain speaking, and a heart yearning for the souls of his brethren and his sisters, he stormed the bosoms of many; and this afternoon, as he reasoned like Paul of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, sinners trembled; and Margaret Woffington was of those who trembled.

After this day she came ever to the narrow street where shone this house of God; and still new light burst upon her heart and conscience. Here she learned why she was unhappy; here she learned how alone she could be happy; here she learned to know herself; and the moment she knew herself she abhorred herself, and repented in dust and ashes.

This strong and straightforward character made no attempt to reconcile two things that an average Christian

would have continued to reconcile. Her interest fell in a moment before her new sense of right. She flung her profession from her like a poisonous weed.

Long before this Mrs. Vane had begged her to leave the stage. She had replied that it was to her what wine is to weak stomachs. "But," added she, "do not fear that I will ever crawl down-hill, and unravel my own reputation; nor will I ever do as I have seen others,—stand groaning at the wing, to go on giggling, and come off gasping. No! the first night the boards do not spring beneath my feet, and the pulse of the public beat under my hand, I am gone. Next day, at rehearsal, instead of Woffington, a note will come, to tell the manager that henceforth Woffington is herself,—at Twickenham, or Richmond, or Harrow-on-the-Hill,—far from his dust, his din, and his glare,—quiet, till God takes her; amidst grass, and flowers, and charitable deeds."

This day had not come; it was in the zenith of her charms and her fame that she went home one night, after a play, and never entered a theatre by front door or back door again. She declined all leave-taking and ceremony.

"When a publican shuts up shop and ceases to diffuse liquid poison, he does not invite the world to put up the shutters; neither will I. Actors overrate themselves ridiculously," added she; "I am not of that importance to the world, nor the world to me. I fling away a dirty old glove instead of soiling my fingers filling it with more guineas, and the world loses in me—what? another old glove, full of words; half of them idle, the rest wicked, untrue, silly, or impure. *Rougissons, taisons-nous, et partons.*"

She now changed her residence, and withdrew politely from her old associates, courting two classes only, the good and the poor. She had always sup-

ported her mother and sister, but now charity became her system. The following is characteristic.

A gentleman who had greatly admired this dashing actress met one day, in the suburbs, a lady in an old black-silk gown and a grey shawl, with a large basket on her arm. She showed him its contents,—worsted stockings of prodigious thickness, which she was carrying to some of her *protégés*.

"But surely that is a waste of your valuable time," remonstrated her admirer. "Much better buy them."

"But, my good soul," replied the representative of Sir Harry Wildair, "you can't buy them. Nobody in this wretched town can knit worsted hose except Woffington."

Conversions like this are open to just suspicion, and some did not fail to confound her with certain great sinners who have turned austere self-deceivers when sin smiled no more. But this was mere conjecture. The facts were clear and speaking to the contrary. This woman left folly at its brightest, and did not become austere; on the contrary, though she laughed less, she was observed to smile far oftener than before. She was a humble and penitent, but cheerful, hopeful Christian.

Another class of detractors took a somewhat opposite ground; they accused her of bigotry for advising a young female friend against the stage as a business. But let us hear herself. This is what she said to the girl:—

"At the bottom of my heart I always loved and honored virtue. Yet the tendencies of the stage so completely overcame my good sentiments that I was for years a worthless woman. It is a situation of uncommon and incessant temptation. Ask yourself, my child, whether there is nothing else you can do but this. It is, I think, our duty and our wisdom to fly

temptation whenever we can, as it is to resist it when we cannot escape it."

Was this the tone of bigotry?

Easy in fortune, penitent, but cheerful, Mrs. Wofington had now but one care,—to efface the memory of her former self, and to give as many years to purity and piety as had gone to folly and frailty. This was not to be! The Almighty did not permit, or perhaps I should say, did not require this.

Some unpleasant symptoms had long attracted her notice, but in the bustle of her profession had received little attention. She was now persuaded by her own medical attendant to consult Dr. Bowdler, who had a great reputation, and had been years ago an acquaintance and an admirer. He visited her, he examined her by means little used in that day, and he saw at once that her days were numbered.

Dr. Bowdler's profession and experience had not steeled his heart as they generally do and must do. He could not tell her this sad news, so he asked her for pen and paper, and said, "I will write a prescription to Mr.———." He then wrote, not a prescription, but a few lines begging Mr.———to convey the cruel intelligence by degrees, and with care and tenderness. "It is all we can do for her," said he.

He looked so gravely while writing the supposed prescription that it unluckily occurred to Mrs. Wofington to look over him. She stole archly behind him, and, with a smile on her face, read her death-warrant.

It was a cruel stroke? A gasping sigh broke from her. At this Dr. Bowdler looked up, and to his horror saw the sweet face he had doomed to the tomb looking earnestly and anxiously at him, and very pale and grave. He was shocked, and, strange to say, she whose death-warrant he had signed ran and

brought him a glass of wine, for he was quite overcome. Then she gave him her hand in her own sweet way, and bade him not grieve for her, for she was not afraid to die, and had long learned that "life is a walking shadow, a poor player, who frets and struts his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more."

But no sooner was the doctor gone than she wept bitterly. Poor soul! she had set her heart upon living as many years to God as she had to the world, and she had hoped to wipe out her former self.

"Alas!" she said to her sister, "I have done more harm than I can ever hope to do good now; and my long life of folly and wickedness will be remembered,—will be what they call famous; my short life of repentance, who will know, or heed, or take to profit?"

But she soon ceased to repine. She bowed to the will of Heaven, and set her house in order, and awaited her summons. The tranquility of her life and her courageous spirit were unfavourable to the progress of disease, and I am glad to say she was permitted to live nearly three years after this; and these three years were the happiest period of her whole life. Works of piety and love made the days eventful. She was at home now,—she had never been at home in folly and loose living. All her bitterness was gone now, with its cause.

Reader, it was with her as it is with many an autumn day; clouds darken the sun, rain and wind sweep over all—till day declines. But then comes one heavenly hour when all ill things seem spent. There is no more wind, no more rain. The great sun comes forth, not fiery bright indeed, but full of tranquil glory, and warms the sky with ruby waves, and the hearts of men with hope, as, parting with us for a little space, he glides slowly and peacefully to rest.

So fared it with this humble, penitent, and now happy Christian.

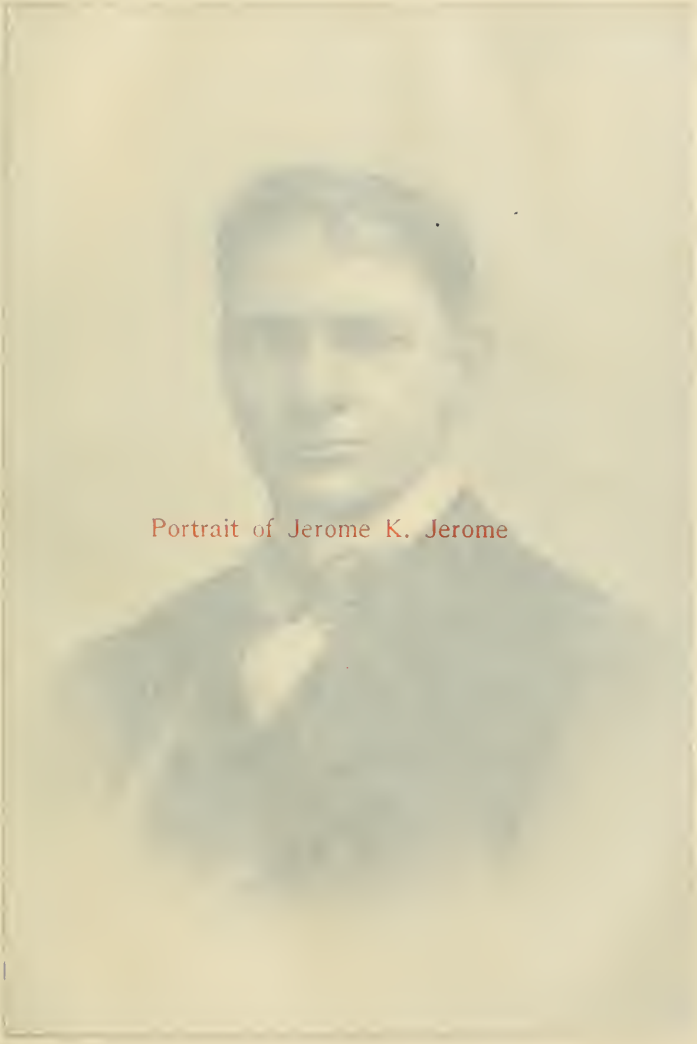
A part of her desire was given her. She lived long enough to read a firm recantation of her former self, to show the world a great repentance, and to leave upon indelible record one more proof what alone is true wisdom, and where alone true joys are to be found.

She endured some physical pain, as all must who die in their prime. But this never wrung a sigh from her great heart; and within she had the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

I am not strong enough to follow her to her last hour; nor is it needed. Enough that her own words came true. When the great summons came it found her full of hope, and peace, and joy,—sojourning, not dwelling, upon earth; far from dust and din and vice; the Bible in her hand, the Cross in her heart; quiet amidst grass, and flowers, and charitable deeds.

"NON OMNEM MORITURAM."

STAGE-LAND



Portrait of Jerome K. Jerome

STAGE-LAND

By Jerome K. Jerome

CHAPTER I

THE STAGE HERO

HIS name is George, generally speaking: "Call me George!" he says to the heroine. She calls him George (in a very low voice, because she is so young and timid). Then he is happy.

The Stage hero never has any work to do. He is always hanging about, and getting into trouble. His chief aim in life is to be accused of crimes he has never committed, and if he can muddle things up with a corpse, in some complicated way, so as to get himself reasonably mistaken for the murderer, he feels his day has not been wasted.

He has a wonderful gift of speech, and a flow of language, calculated to strike terror to the bravest heart. It is a grand thing to hear him bullyragging the villain.

The Stage hero is always entitled to "estates," chiefly remarkable for their high state of cultivation and for the eccentric ground plan of the "Manor House" upon them.

The house is never more than one story high, but it makes up in green stuff over the porch what it lacks in size and convenience.

The chief drawback in connection with it, to our

eyes, is that all the inhabitants of the neighboring village appear to live in the front garden, but the hero evidently thinks it rather nice of them, as it enables him to make speeches to them from the front door step—his favorite recreation.

There is generally a public house immediately opposite. This is handy. These "estates" are a great anxiety to the Stage hero. He is not what you would call a business man, as far as we can judge, and his attempts to manage his own property invariably land him in ruin and distraction. His "estates," however, always get taken away from him by the villain, before the first act is over, and this saves him all further trouble with regard to them, until the end of the play, when he gets saddled with them once more.

Not but what it must be confessed that there is much excuse for the poor fellow's general bewilderment concerning his affairs; and for his legal errors and confusion, generally. Stage "law" may not be quite the most fearful and wonderful mystery in the whole universe, but it's near it—very near it. We were under the impression, at one time, that we ourselves, knew something—just a little—about statutory and common law, but, after paying attention to the legal points of one or two plays, we found that we were mere children at it.

We thought we would not be beaten, and we determined to get to the bottom of Stage law, and to understand it; but, after some six months' effort, our brain (a singularly fine one) began to soften; and we abandoned the study, believing it would come cheaper, in the end, to offer a suitable reward, of about fifty or sixty thousand pounds, say, to any one who would explain it to us.

The reward has remained unclaimed to the present day, and is still open.

One gentleman did come to our assistance, a little

while ago, but his explanations only made the matter more confusing to our mind than it was before. He was surprised at, what he called, our density, and said the thing was all clear and simple to him. But we discovered afterwards that he was an escaped lunatic.

The only points of Stage "law" on which we are at all clear, are as follows:—

That if a man dies, without leaving a will, then all his property goes to the nearest villain.

But that if a man dies, and leaves a will, then all his property goes to whoever can get possession of that will.

That the accidental loss of the three and six penny copy of a marriage certificate annuls the marriage.

That the evidence of one prejudiced witness, of shady antecedents, is quite sufficient to convict the most stainless and irreproachable gentleman of crimes for the committal of which he could have had no possible motive.

But that this evidence may be rebutted, years afterwards, and the conviction quashed without further trial, by the unsupported statement of the comic man.

That if A forges B's name to a check, then the law of the land is that B shall be sentenced to ten years' penal servitude.

That ten minutes' notice is all that is required to foreclose a mortgage.

That all trials of criminal cases take place in the front parlor of the victim's house, the villain acting as counsel, judge and jury rolled into one, and a couple of policemen being told off to follow his instructions.

These are a few of the more salient features of Stage "law" so far as we have been able to grasp it up to the present; but, as fresh acts and clauses and modifications appear to be introduced for each new play, we have abandoned all hope of ever being able to really comprehend the subject.

To return to our hero, the state of the law, as above

sketched, naturally confuses him, and the villain, who is the only human being who does seem to understand Stage legal questions, is easily able to fleece and ruin him. The simple-minded hero signs mortgages and bills of sale, and deeds of gift and such like things, under the impression that he is playing some sort of a round game; and then, when he cannot pay the interest, they take his wife and children away from him, and turn him adrift into the world.

Being thrown upon his own resources, he naturally starves.

He can make long speeches, he can tell you all his troubles, he can stand in the limelight and strike attitudes, he can knock the villain down, and he can defy the police, but these requirements are not much in demand in the labor market, and, as they are all he can do or cares to do, he finds earning his living a much more difficult affair than he fancied.

There is a deal too much hard work about it for him. He soon gives up trying it at all, and prefers to eke out an uncertain existence by sponging upon good-natured old Irish women, and generous but weak-minded young artisans who have left their native village to follow him, and enjoy the advantage of his company and conversation.

And so he drags out his life, during the middle of the piece, raving at Fortune, raging at Humanity and whining about his miseries until the last act.

Then he gets back those "estates" of his into his possession once again, and can go back to the village, and make more moral speeches, and be happy.

Moral speeches are, undoubtedly, his leading article, and of these, it must be owned he has an inexhaustible stock. He is as chock full of noble sentiments as a bladder is of wind. They are weak and watery sentiments of the sixpenny tea-meeting order. We have a

dim notion that we have heard them before. The sound of them always conjures up to our mind the vision of a dull long room, full of oppressive silence, broken only by the scratching of steel pens, and an occasional whispered: "Give us a suck, Bill. You know I always liked you"; or a louder: "Please, sir, speak to Jimmy Boggles. He's a jogging my elbow."

The Stage hero, however, evidently regards these meanderings as gems of brilliant thought, fresh from the philosophic.

The gallery greet them with enthusiastic approval. They are a warm-hearted people, galleryites, and they like to give a hearty welcome to old friends.

And then, too, the sentiments are so good, and a British gallery is so moral. We doubt if there could be discovered on this earth any body of human beings one half so moral—so fond of goodness even when it is slow and stupid—so hateful of meanness in word or deed—as a modern theatrical gallery.

The early Christian martyrs were sinful and worldly, compared with an Adelphi Gallery.

The Stage hero is a very powerful man. You wouldn't think it, to look at him, but you wait till the heroine cries: "Help! Oh, George, save me!" or the police attempt to run him in. Then two villains, three extra hired ruffians, and four detectives are about his fighting weight.

If he knocks down less than three men with one blow, he fears that he must be ill, and wonders, "Why this strange weakness?"

The hero has his own way of making love. He always does it from behind. The girl turns away from him, when he begins (she being, as we have said, shy and timid), and he takes hold of her hands, and breathes his attachment down her back.

The Stage hero always wears patent leather boots, and

they are always spotlessly clean. Sometimes he is rich, and lives in a room with seven doors to it, and at other times he is starving in a garret; but in either event, he still wears brand-new patent leather boots.

He might raise at least three and sixpence on those boots, and, when the baby is crying for food, it occurs to us that it would be better if, instead of praying to Heaven, he took off those boots and pawned them; but this does not seem to occur to him.

He crosses the African desert in patent leather boots, does the Stage hero. He takes a supply with him, when he is wrecked on an uninhabited island. He arrives from long and trying journeys; his clothes are ragged and torn; but his boots are new and shiny. He puts on patent leather boots to tramp through the Australian bush, to fight in Egypt, to discover the North Pole.

Sometimes he is a gold digger, sometimes a dock laborer, sometimes a soldier, sometimes a sailor, but, whatever he is, he wears patent leather boots.

He goes boating in patent leather boots, he plays cricket in them; he goes fishing and shooting in them. He will go to Heaven in patent leather boots, or he will decline the invitation.

The Stage hero never talks in a simple, straightforward way, like a mere ordinary mortal.

"You will write to me, when you are away, Dear, won't you?" says the heroine.

A mere human being would reply:

"Why, of course I shall, Ducky, every day."

But the Stage hero is a superior creature. He says:

"Dost see yonder star, Sweet?"

She looks up, and owns that she does see yonder star; and off he starts and drivels on about that star for full five minutes, and says he will cease to write to her when

that pale star has fallen from its place amidst the firmament of Heaven.

The result of a long course of acquaintanceship with Stage heroes has been, so far as we are concerned, to create a yearning for a new kind of Stage hero. What we would like for a change, would be a man who wouldn't cackle and brag quite so much, but who was capable of taking care of himself for a day, without getting into trouble.

CHAPTER II

THE STAGE VILLAIN

HE wears a clean collar, and smokes a cigarette; that is how we know he is a villain. In real life, it is often difficult to tell a villain from an honest man, and this gives rise to mistakes; but, on the stage, as we have said, villains wear clean collars and smoke cigarettes, and thus all fear of blunder is avoided.

It is well that the rule does not hold off the stage, or good men might be misjudged. We ourselves, for instance, wear a clean collar—sometimes.

It might be very awkward for our family, especially on Sundays.

He has no power of repartee, has the Stage villain. All the good people in the play say rude and insulting things to him, and snack at him, and score off him, all through the act, but he can never answer them back—can never think of anything clever to say in return.

"Ha, ha! Wait till Monday week," is the most brilliant retort that he can make, and he has to get into a corner by himself to think of even that.

The Stage villain's career is always very easy and prosperous up to within a minute of the end of each act. Then he gets suddenly let in, generally by the comic man. It always happens so. Yet the villain is always intensely surprised each time. He never seems to learn anything from experience.

A few years ago the villain used to be blessed with a hopeful and philosophical temperament, which en-

abled him to bear up under these constantly recurring disappointments and reverses. It was "no matter," he would say. Crushed for the moment, though he might be, his buoyant heart never lost courage. He had a simple, childlike faith in Providence. "A time will come," he would remark, and this idea consoled him.

Of late, however, this trusting hopefulness of his, as expressed in the beautiful lines we have quoted, appears to have forsaken him. We are sorry for this, we always regarded it as one of the finest traits in his character.

The Stage villain's love for the heroine is sublime in its steadfastness. She is a woman of lugubrious and tearful disposition, added to which she is usually encumbered with a couple of priggish and highly objectionable children, and what possible attraction there is about her we ourselves can never understand; but the Stage villain—well there, he is fairly mashed on her.

Nothing can alter his affection. She hates him and insults him to an extent that is really unladylike. Every time he tries to explain his devotion to her, the hero comes in and knocks him down in the middle of it, or the comic man catches him during one or the other of his harrassing love scenes with her, and goes off and tells the "villagers" or the "guests," and they come round and nag him (we should think that the villain must grow to positively dislike the comic man before the piece is over).

Notwithstanding all this he still hankers after her, and swears she shall be his. He is not a bad-looking fellow, and from what we know of the market, we should say there are plenty of other girls who would jump at him; yet for the sake of settling down with this dismal young female as his wife, he is prepared to go through a laborious and exhausting course of crime, and to be bullied and insulted by every one he meets.

His love sustains him under it all. He robs and forges, and cheats, and lies, and murders, and arsons. If there were any other crimes he could commit to win her affection, he would, for her sweet sake, commit them cheerfully. But he doesn't know any others—at all events, he is not well up in any others—and she still does not care for him, and what is he to do?

It is very unfortunate for both of them. It is evident, to the merest spectator, that the lady's life would be much happier if the villain did *not* love her quite so much: and, as for him, his career might be calmer, and less criminal, but for his deep devotion to her.

You see it is having met her in early life that is the cause of all the trouble. He first saw her when she was a child, and loved her, "aye, even then." Ah, and he would have worked—slaved for her, and have made her rich and happy. He might, perhaps, even have been a good man.

She tries to soothe him. She says she loathed him with an unspeakable horror from the first moment that her eyes met his revolting form. She says she saw a hideous toad once in a nasty pond, and she says that rather would she take that noisome reptile, and clasp its slimy bosom to her own, than tolerate one instant's touch from his (the villain's) arms.

This sweet prattle of hers, however, only charms him all the more. He says he will win her yet.

Nor does the villain seem much happier in his less serious love episodes. After he has indulged in a little badinage of the above character with his real lady love, the heroine, he will occasionally try a little light flirtation passage with her maid or lady friend.

The maid, or friend, does not waste time in simile or metaphor. She calls him a black-hearted scoundrel, and clumps him over the head.

Of recent years it has been attempted to cheer the

Stage villain's loveless life by making the village clergyman's daughter gone on him. But it is generally about ten years ago, when even she loved him, and her love has turned to hate by the time the play opens; so that, on the whole, his lot can hardly be said to have been much improved in this direction.

Not but what it must be confessed that her change of feeling is, under the circumstances, only natural. He took her away from her happy, peaceful home, when she was very young, and brought her up to this wicked, overgrown London. He did not marry her. There is no earthly reason why he should not have married her. She must have been a fine girl at that time (and she is a good-looking woman as it is, with dash and go about her), and any other man would have settled down cosily with her, and have led a simple, blameless life.

But the Stage villain is built cussed.

He ill uses this female most shockingly—not for any cause or motive whatever, indeed his own practical interests should prompt him to treat her well, and keep friends with her—but from the natural cussedness to which we have just alluded.

When he speaks to her, he seizes her by the wrist and breathes what he's got to say into her ear, and it tickles and revolts her.

The only thing in which he is good to her is in the matter of dress. He does not stint her on dress.

The Stage villain is superior to the villain of real life. The villain of real life is actuated by mere sordid and selfish motives. The Stage villain does villainy not for any personal advantage to himself, but merely from the love of the thing, as an art. Villainy is, to him, its own reward; he revels in it.

"Better far be poor and villainous," he says to himself, "than possess all the wealth of the Indies, with a clear conscience." "I *will* be a villain," he cries, "I

will, at great expense and inconvenience to myself, murder the good old man, get the hero accused of the crime, and make love to his wife, while he is in prison. It will be a risky and laborious business for me, from beginning to end, and bring me no practical advantage whatever. The girl will call me insulting names, when I pay her a visit, and will push me violently in the chest when I get near her; her golden-haired infant will say I am a bad man, and may even refuse to kiss me. The comic man will cover me with humorous opprobrium; and the villagers will get a day off, and hang about the village pub and hoot me. Everybody will see through my villainy, and I shall be nabbed in the end. I always am. But it is no matter, I will be a villain, ha, ha!"

On the whole, the Stage villain appears to us to be a rather badly used individual. He never has any "estates" or property himself, and his only chance of getting on in the world is to sneak the hero's. He has an affectionate disposition, and, never having any wife of his own, he is compelled to love other people's: but his affection is ever unrequited, and everything comes wrong for him in the end.

Our advice to Stage villains generally, after careful observation of (stage) life, and (stage) human nature, is as follows—

Never be a Stage villain at all, if you can help it. The life is too harassing, and the remuneration altogether disproportionate to the risks and labor.

If you have run away with the clergyman's daughter, and she still clings to you, do not throw her down in the center of the stage, and call her names. It only irritates her, and she takes a dislike to you, and goes and warns the other girl.

Don't have too many accomplices; and if you *have* got them, don't keep sneering at them and bullying

them. A word from them can hang you, and yet you do all you can to rile them. Treat them civilly, and let them have their fair share of the swag. Beware of the comic man. When you are committing a murder, or robbing a safe, you never look to see where the comic man is. You are so careless in that way. On the whole, it might be as well if you murdered the comic man early in the play.

Don't make love to the hero's wife. She doesn't like you; how can you expect her to? Besides, it isn't proper. Why don't you get a girl of your own?

Lastly, don't go down to the scenes of your crimes in the last act. You always will do this. We suppose it is some extra cheap excursion down there that attracts you. But you take our advice, and don't you go. That is always where you get nabbed. The police know your habits from experience. They do not trouble to look for you. They go down, in the last act, to the old hall, or the ruined mill, where you did the deed, and wait for you.

In nine cases out of ten you would get off scot free but for this idiotic custom of yours. Do keep away from the place. Go abroad, or to the seaside when the last act begins, and stop there till it is over. You will be safe then.

CHAPTER III

THE STAGE HEROINE

SHE is always in trouble—and don't she let you know it, too! Her life is undeniably a hard one.

Nothing goes right with her. We all have our troubles, but the Stage heroine never has anything else. If she only got one afternoon a week off from trouble, or had her Sundays free, it would be something.

But no! misfortune stalks beside her from week's beginning to week's end.

After her husband has been found guilty of murder, which is about the least thing that can ever happen to him, and her white-haired father has become a bankrupt, and has died of a broken heart, and the home of her childhood has been sold up, then her infant goes and contracts lingering fever.

She weeps a good deal during the course of her troubles, which, we suppose, is only natural enough, poor woman. But it is depressing from the point of view of the audience, and we almost wish, before the evening is out, that she had not got quite so much trouble.

It is over the child that she does most of her weeping. The child has a damp time of it altogether. We sometimes wonder that it never catches rheumatism.

She is very good, is the Stage heroine. The comic man expresses a belief that she is a born angel. She reproves him for this with a tearful smile (it wouldn't be her smile if it wasn't tearful).

"Oh, no," she says (sadly of course), "I have many, many faults."

We rather wish that she would show them a little more. Her excessive goodness seems somehow to pall upon us. Our only consolation, while watching her, is that there are not many good women off the stage. Life is bad enough, as it is; if there were many women, in real life, as good as the Stage heroine, it would be unbearable.

The Stage heroine's only pleasure in life is to go out in a snowstorm without an umbrella, and with no bonnet on. She has a bonnet, we know (rather a tasteful little thing), we have seen it hanging up behind the door of her room; but when she comes out for a night stroll, during a heavy snowstorm (accompanied by thunder), she is most careful to leave it at home. Maybe she fears the snow will spoil it, and she is a careful girl.

She always brings her child out with her on these excursions. She seems to think that it will freshen it up. The child does not appreciate the snow as much as she does. He says it's cold.

One thing that must irritate the Stage heroine very much, on these occasions, is the way in which the snow seems to lie in wait for her, and follow her about. It is quite a fine night, before she comes on the scene: the moment she appears, it begins to snow. It snows heavily all the while she remains about, and, the instant she goes, it clears up again, and keeps dry for the rest of the evening.

The way the snow "goes" for that poor woman is most unfair. It always snows much heavier in the particular spot where she is sitting than it does anywhere else in the whole street. Why, we have sometimes seen a heroine sitting in the midst of a blinding snowstorm, while the other side of the road was as dry as a bone. And it never seemed to occur to her to cross over.

We have even known a more than usually malignant

snowstorm to follow a heroine three times round the stage, and then go off R. with her.

Of course, you can't get away from a snowstorm like that! A Stage snowstorm is the kind of snowstorm that would follow you upstairs, and want to come into bed with you.

Another curious thing about these Stage snowstorms is that the moon is always shining brightly throughout the whole of them. And it shines only on the heroine, and it follows her about, just like the snow does.

Nobody fully understands what a wonderful work of nature the moon is except people acquainted with the stage. Astronomy teaches you something about the moon, but you learn a good deal more from a few visits to a theater. You will find from the latter that the moon only shines on heroes and heroines, with, perhaps, an occasional beam on the comic man: it always goes out when it sees the villain coming.

It is surprising, too, how quickly the moon *can* go out on the stage. At one moment it is riding in full radiance in the midst of a cloudless sky, and the next instant it is gone! Just as though it had been turned off at the meter. It makes you quite giddy at first, until you get used to it.

The Stage heroine is inclined to thoughtfulness rather than gaiety.

In her cheerful moments the Stage heroine thinks she sees the spirit of her mother, or the ghost of her father, or she dreams of her dead baby.

But this is only in her very merry moods. As a rule, she is too much occupied with weeping to have time for frivolous reflections.

She has a great flow of language, and a wonderful gift of metaphor and simile—more forcible than elegant—and this might be rather trying in a wife, under ordinary circumstances. But as the hero is generally sen-

tenced to ten years' penal servitude, on his wedding morn, he escapes, for a period, from a danger that might well appal a less fortunate bridegroom.

Sometimes the Stage heroine has a brother, and if so, he is sure to be mistaken for her lover. We never came across a brother and sister, in real life, who ever gave the most suspicious person any grounds for mistaking them for lovers; but the Stage brother and sister are so affectionate that the error is excusable.

And when the mistake does occur, and the husband comes in suddenly and finds them kissing and raves, she doesn't turn round and say: "Why, you silly cuckoo, it's only my brother."

That would be simple and sensible, and would not suit the Stage heroine at all. No, she does all in her power to make everybody believe it is true, so that she can suffer in silence.

She does so love to suffer.

Marriage is undoubtedly a failure in the case of the Stage heroine.

If the Stage heroine were well advised she would remain single. Her husband means well. He is decidedly affectionate. But he is unfortunate and inexperienced in worldly affairs. Things come right for him at the end of the play, it is true; but we would not recommend the heroine to place too much reliance upon the continuance of this happy state of affairs. From what we have seen of her husband and his business capabilities, during the five acts preceding, we are inclined to doubt the possibility of his being anything but unfortunate to the end of his career.

True, he has at last got his "rights" (which he would never have lost had he had a head instead of a sentimental bladder on his shoulders), the villain is handcuffed, and he and the heroine have settled down comfortably, next door to the comic man.

But this heavenly existence will never last. The Stage hero was built for trouble, and he will be in it again in another month, you bet. They'll get up another mortgage for him on the "estates"; and he won't know, bless you, whether he really did sign it, or whether he didn't, and out he will go.

And he'll slop his name about to documents without ever looking to see what he's doing, and be let in for Lord knows what; and another wife will turn up for him that he had married, when a boy, and forgotten all about.

And the next corpse that comes to the village he'll get mixed up with—sure to—and have it laid to his door, and there'll be all the old business over again.

No, our advice to the Stage heroine is, to get rid of the hero as soon as possible, marry the villain, and go and live abroad, somewhere where the comic man won't come fooling around.

She will be much happier.

CHAPTER IV

THE STAGE COMIC MAN

HE follows the hero all over the world. This is rough on the hero.

What makes him so gone on the hero is that, when they were boys together, the hero used to knock him down and kick him. The comic man remembers this with a glow of pride, when he is grown up; and it makes him love the hero and determine to devote his life to him.

He is a man of humble station—the comic man. The village blacksmith or a pedlar. You never see a rich or aristocratic comic man on the stage. You can have your choice on the stage; you can be funny and of lowly origin, or you can be well-to-do and without any sense of humor. Peers and policemen are the people most utterly devoid of humor on the stage.

The chief duty of the comic man's life is to make love to servant girls, and they slap his face; but it does not discourage him; he seems to be more smitten by them than ever.

The comic man is happy under any fate, and he says funny things at funerals, and when the bailiffs are in the house, or the hero is waiting to be hanged. This sort of man is rather trying in real life. In real life such a man would probably be slaughtered to death, and buried at an early period of his career, but on the stage they put up with him.

He is very good, is the comic man. He can't abear

villainy. To thwart villainy is his life's ambition, and in this noble object fortune backs him up grandly. Bad people come and commit their murders and thefts right under his nose, so that he can denounce them in the last act.

They never see him there, standing close beside them, while they are performing these fearful crimes.

It is marvelous how short-sighted people on the stage are. We always thought that the young lady in real life was moderately good at not seeing folks she did not want to, when they were standing straight in front of her, but her affliction in this direction is as nothing compared with that of her brothers and sisters on the stage.

These unfortunate people come into rooms where there are crowds of people about—people that it is most important that they *should* see, and owing to *not* seeing them they get themselves into fearful trouble, and they never notice any of them. They talk to somebody opposite, and they can't see a third person that is standing bang between the two of them.

You might fancy they wore blinkers.

Then, again, their hearing is so terribly weak. It really ought to be seen to. People talk and chatter at the very top of their voices, close behind them, and they never hear a word—don't know anybody's there, even. After it has been going on for half an hour, and the people "up stage" have made themselves hoarse with shouting, and somebody has been boisterously murdered, and all the furniture upset, then the people "down stage" "think they hear a noise."

The comic man always rows with his wife, if he is married, or with his sweetheart, if he is not married. They quarrel all day long. It must be a trying life, you would think, but they appear to like it.

How the comic man lives and supports his wife (she

looks as if she wanted something to support her, too), and family is always a mystery to us. As we have said, he is not a rich man, and he never seems to earn any money. Sometimes he keeps a shop, and, in the way he manages business, it must be an expensive thing to keep, for he never charges anybody for anything, he is so generous. All his customers seem to be people more or less in trouble, and he can't find it in his heart to ask them to pay for their goods, under such distressing circumstances.

He stuffs their basket full with twice as much as they came to buy, pushes their money back into their hands, and wipes away a tear.

Why doesn't a comic man come and set up a grocery store in *our* neighborhood?

When the shop does not prove sufficiently profitable (as under the above-explained method sometimes happens to be the case) the comic man's wife seeks to add to the income by taking in lodgers. This is a bad move on her part, for it always ends in the lodgers taking *her* in. The hero and heroine, who seem to have been waiting for something of the sort, immediately come and take possession of the whole house.

Of course the comic man could not think of charging, for mere board and lodging, the man who knocked him down when they were boys together! Besides, was not the heroine (now the hero's wife) the sweetest and the blithest girl in all the village of Deepdale? (They must have been a gloomy band, the others!) How can any one with a human heart beneath his bosom suggest that people like that should pay for their rent and washing!

The comic man is shocked at his wife for even thinking of such a thing, and the end of it is that Mr. and Mrs. Hero live there for the rest of the play, rent free; coals, soap, candles, and hair oil for the child, being provided for them on the same terms.

The hero raises vague and feeble objections to this arrangement now and again. He says he will not hear of such a thing, that he will stay no longer to be a burden upon these honest folk, but will go forth unto the roadside, and there starve. The comic man has awful work with him, but wins at last, and persuades the noble fellow to stop on, and give the place another trial.

When, a morning or so after witnessing one of these beautiful scenes, our own landlady knocks at our door and creates a disturbance over a paltry matter of three or four weeks' rent, and says she'll have her money or out we go that very day, and drifts slowly away down toward the kitchen, abusing us in a rising voice as she descends, then we think of these things and grow sad.

It is the example of the people round him that makes the comic man so generous. Everybody is generous on the stage. They are giving away their purses all day long: that is the regulation "tip" on the stage,—one's purse. The moment you hear a tale of woe, you grab it out of your pocket, slap it into the woe-or's palm, grip his hand, dash away a tear, and exit: you don't even leave yourself a bus fare home. You walk back quickly, and get another purse.

Middle-class people and others, on the stage, who are short of purses, have to content themselves with throwing about rolls of bank-notes, and tipping servants with five pound checks. Very stingy people, on the stage, have been known to be so cussed mean as to give away mere sovereigns.

But they are generally only villains or lords that descend to this sort of thing. Respectable stage folk never offer anything less than a purse.

The recipient is very grateful on receiving the purse, (he never looks inside,) and thinks Heaven ought to reward the donor. They get a lot of work out of Heaven, on the stage. Heaven does all the odd jobs

for them that they don't want to go to the trouble and expense of doing for themselves. Heaven's chief duty, on the stage, is to see to the repayment of all those sums of money that are given or lent to the good people. It is generally requested to do this to the tune of a "thousandfold," an exorbitant rate, when you come to think of it.

Heaven is also expected to take care that the villain gets properly cursed, and to fill up his spare time by bringing misfortune upon the local landlord. It is to avenge everybody, and to help all the good people whenever they are in trouble. And they keep it going in this direction.

And when the hero leaves for prison, Heaven has to take care of his wife and child till he comes out; and if this isn't a handful for it, we don't know what would be!

Heaven, on the stage, is always on the side of the hero and heroine, and against the rogue.

Occasionally, of late years, the comic man has been a bad man, but you can't hate him for it.

What if he does ruin the hero and rob the heroine, and help to murder the good old man! He does it all in such a genial, light-hearted spirit, that it is not in one's heart to feel angry with him. It is the way in which a thing is done that makes all the difference.

Besides, he is always round on his pal, the serious villain, at the end, and that makes it all right.

The comic man is not a sportsman. If he goes out shooting, we know that when he returns we shall hear that he has shot the dog. If he takes his girl out on the river he upsets her (literally, we mean). The comic man never goes out for a day's pleasure without coming home a wreck.

If he merely goes to tea with his girl at her mother's, he swallows a muffin and chokes himself.

The comic man is not happy in his married life, nor does it seem to us that he goes the right way to be so. He calls his wife "his old Dutch clock," "the old geyser," and such like terms of endearment, and addresses her with such remarks as, "Ah, you old cat," "You ugly old nutmeg grater," "You orangamatang, you!" etc., etc.

Well, you know, that is not the way to make things pleasant about the house.

Still, with all his faults we like the comic man. He is not always in trouble, and he does not make long speeches.

Let us bless him.

CHAPTER V

THE STAGE LAWYER

HE is very old, and very long, and very thin. He has white hair. He dresses in the costume of the last generation but seven. He has bushy eyebrows, and is clean shaven. His chin itches, considerably, so that he has to be always scratching it. His favorite remark is, "Ah."

In real life, we have heard of young solicitors, of foppish solicitors, of short solicitors; but, on the stage, they are always very thin and very old. The youngest Stage solicitor we ever remember to have seen looked about sixty—the oldest, about a hundred and forty-five.

By-the-bye, it is never very safe to judge people's ages, on the stage, by their personal appearance. We have known old ladies who looked seventy, if they were a day, turn out to be the mothers of boys of fourteen, while the middle-aged husband of the young wife generally gives one the idea of ninety.

Again, what appears at first sight to be a comfortable looking and eminently respectable elderly lady is often discovered to be, in reality, a giddy, girlish, and inexperienced young thing, the pride of the village or the darling of the regiment.

So, too, an exceptionally stout and short-winded old gentleman, who looks as if he had been living too well, and taking too little exercise for the last forty-five years, is not the heavy father, as you might imagine if you judged from mere external evidence, but a wild, reckless boy.

You would not think so to look at him, but his only faults are that he is so young and light-headed. There is good in him, however, and he will no doubt be steady enough, when he grows up. All the young men of the neighborhood worship him, and the girls love him.

"Here he comes," they say, "dear, dear old Jack—Jack, the darling boy—the headstrong youth—Jack, the leader of our juvenile sports, Jack! whose childish innocence wins all hearts. Three cheers for dancing, bright-eyed Jack!"

On the other hand, ladies with the complexion of eighteen, are, you learn as the story progresses, quite elderly women, the mothers of middle-aged heroes.

The experienced observer of Stage-land never jumps to conclusions from what he sees. He waits till he is told things.

The Stage lawyer never has any office of his own. He transacts all his business at his clients' houses. He will travel hundreds of miles to tell them the most trivial piece of legal information.

It never occurs to him how much simpler it would be to write a letter. The item for "traveling expenses," in his bill of costs, must be something enormous.

There are two moments in the course of his clients' career that the Stage lawyer particularly enjoys. The first is when the client comes unexpectedly into a fortune; the second, when he unexpectedly loses it.

In the former case, upon learning the good news, the Stage lawyer at once leaves his business, and hurries off to the other end of the kingdom to bear the glad tidings. He arrives at the humble domicile of the beneficiary in question, sends up his card, and is ushered into the front parlor. He enters mysteriously, and sits left, client sits right. An ordinary, common lawyer would come to the point at once, state the matter in a plain, business-like way, and trust that he might have

the pleasure of representing, etc., etc.; but such simple methods are not those of the Stage lawyer. He looks at the client, and says:

"You had a father."

The client starts. How on earth did this calm, thin, keen-eyed old man in black know that he had a father? He shuffles and stammers, but the quiet, impenetrable lawyer fixes his cold, glassy eye on him, and he is helpless. Subterfuge, he feels, is useless, and amazed, bewildered, at the knowledge of his most private affairs, possessed by his strange visitant, he admits the fact: he had a father.

The lawyer smiles with a quiet smile of triumph, and scratches his chin. "You had a mother, too, if I am informed correctly," he continues.

It is idle attempting to escape this man's supernatural acuteness, and the client owns up to having had a mother also.

From this, the lawyer goes on to communicate to the client, as a great secret, the whole of his (the client's) history from his cradle upwards, and also the history of his nearer relatives, and in less than half-an-hour from the old man's entrance, or, say, forty minutes, at the outside, the client almost knows what the business is about.

On the other occasion, when the client has lost his fortune, the Stage lawyer is even still happier. He comes down himself to tell the misfortune (he would not miss the job for worlds), and he takes care to choose the most unpropitious moment possible for breaking the news. On the eldest daughter's birthday, when there is a big party on, is his favorite time. He comes in about midnight, and tells them just as they are going down to supper.

He has no idea of business hours, has the Stage

lawyer—to make the thing as unpleasant as possible seems to be his only anxiety.

If he cannot work it for a birthday, then he waits till there's a wedding on, and gets up early in the morning on purpose to run down and spoil the show. To enter among a crowd of happy, joyous fellow-creatures, and leave them utterly crushed and miserable, is the Stage lawyer's hobby.

The Stage lawyer is a very talkative gentleman. He regards the telling of his client's most private affairs to every stranger he meets as part of his professional duties. A good gossip, with a few chance acquaintances, about the family secrets of his employers, is food and drink for the Stage lawyer.

They all go about telling their own and their friends' secrets, to perfect strangers, on the stage. Whenever two people have five minutes to spare, on the stage, they tell each other the story of their lives. "Sit down, and I will tell you the story of my life," is the stage equivalent for the "Come and have a drink," of the outside world.

The good Stage lawyer has generally nursed the heroine on his knee, when a baby (when *she* was a baby, we mean)—when she was only *so* high. It seems to have been a part of his professional duties. The good Stage lawyer also kisses all the pretty girls in the play, and is expected to chuck the housemaid under the chin. It is good to be a good Stage lawyer.

The good Stage lawyer also wipes away a tear when sad things happen; and he turns away to do this, and blows his nose, and says he thinks he has a fly in his eye. This touching trait in his character is always held in great esteem by the audience, and is much applauded.

The good Stage lawyer is never, by any chance, a married man. (Few good men are, so we gather from our married lady friends.) He loved, in early life, the

heroine's mother. That "sainted woman" (tear and nose business) died, and is now among the angels—the gentleman who did marry her, by-the-bye, is not quite so sure about this latter point, but the lawyer is fixed on the idea.

In stage literature of a frivolous nature the lawyer is a very different individual. In comedy, he is young, he possesses chambers, and he is married (there is no doubt about this latter fact); and his wife and his mother-in-law spend most of the day in his office, and make the dull old place quite lively for him.

He only has one client. She is a nice lady, and affable, but her antecedents are doubtful, and she seems to be no better than she ought to be—possibly worse. But anyhow, she is the sole business that the poor fellow has—is, in fact, his only source of income, and might, one would think, under such circumstances, be accorded a welcome by his family. But his wife and his mother-in-law, on the contrary, take a violent dislike to her; and the lawyer has to put her in the coal scuttle, or lock her up in the safe, whenever he hears either of these female relatives of his coming up the stairs.

We should not care to be the client of a farcical comedy Stage lawyer. Legal transactions are trying to the nerves under the most favorable circumstances; conducted by a farcical Stage lawyer, the business would be too exciting for us.

CHAPTER VI

THE STAGE ADVENTURESS

SHE sits on a table and smokes a cigarette. A cigarette on the stage is always the badge of infamy.

In real life the cigarette is usually the hall-mark of the particularly mild and harmless individual. It is the dissipation of the Y.M.C.A.; the innocent joy of the pure-hearted boy, long ere the demoralizing influence of our vaunted civilization has dragged him down into the depths of the short clay.

But behind the cigarette, on the stage, lurks ever black-hearted villainy and abandoned womanhood.

The adventuress is generally of foreign extraction. They do not make bad women in England; the article is entirely of continental manufacture, and has to be imported.

She speaks English with a charming little French accent, and she makes up for this by speaking French with a good sound English one.

She seems a smart business woman, and she would probably get on very well if it were not for her friends and relations. Friends and relations are a trying class of people, even in real life, as we all know, but the friends and relations of the Stage adventuress are a particularly irritating lot. They never leave her, never does she get a day or an hour off from them. Wherever she goes, there the whole tribe goes with her.

They all go with her in a body when she calls on her young man, and it is as much as she can do to persuade them to go into the next room, even for five minutes,

and give her a chance. When she is married they come and live with her. They know her dreadful secret, and it keeps them in comfort for years. Knowing somebody's secret seems, on the stage, to be one of the most profitable and least exhausting professions going.

She is fond of married life, is the adventuress, and she goes in for it pretty extensively. She has husbands all over the globe, most of them in prison, but they escape and turn up in the last act, and spoil all the poor girl's plans. That is so like husbands—no consideration, no thought for their poor wives.

They are not a prepossessing lot either, those early husbands of hers. What she could have seen in them to induce her to marry them is indeed a mystery.

The adventuress dresses magnificently. Where she gets the money from we never could understand, for she and her companions are always more or less complaining of being "stone broke." Dressmakers must be a trusting people where she comes from.

The adventuress is like the proverbial cat as regards the number of lives she is possessed of. You never know when she is *really* dead. Most people like to die once and have done with it, but the adventuress, after once or twice trying to, seems to get quite to like it, and goes on giving way to it, and then it grows upon her until she can't help herself, and it becomes a sort of craving with her.

This habit of hers is, however, a very trying one for her friends and husbands, it makes things so uncertain. Something ought to be done to break her of it. Her husbands, on hearing that she is dead, go into raptures, and rush off and marry other people, and then, just as they are starting off on their new honeymoon, up she crops again, as fresh as paint. It is really most annoying.

For ourselves, were we the husband of a Stage ad-

venturess, we should never, after what we have seen of the species, feel quite justified in believing her to be dead, unless we had killed and buried her ourselves; and even then we should be more easy in our minds if we could arrange to sit on her grave for a week or so afterwards. These women are so artful!

But it is not only the adventuress who will persist in coming to life again every time she is slaughtered. They all do it on the stage. They are all so unreliable in this respect. It must be most disheartening to the murderers.

And then again, it is something extraordinary, when you come to think of it, what a tremendous amount of killing some of them can stand, and still come up smiling in the next act, not a penny the worse for it. They get stabbed, and shot, and thrown over precipices thousands of feet high, and, bless you, it does them good—it is like a tonic to them.

As for the young man that is coming home to see his girl, you simply *can't* kill him. Achilles was a summer rose compared with him. Nature and mankind have not sufficient materials in hand, as yet, to kill that man. Science has but the strength of a puling babe against his invulnerability. You can waste your time on earthquakes and shipwrecks, volcanic eruptions, floods, explosions, railway accidents, and such like sort of things, if you are foolish enough to do so; but it is no good your imagining that anything of the kind can hurt him, because it can't.

There will be thousands of people killed, thousands in each instance, but one human being will always escape, and that one human being will be the Stage young man who is coming home to see his girl.

He is forever being *reported* dead, but it always turns out to be another fellow who was like him, or who had on his (the young man's) hat. *He* is bound to be out of it, whoever else may be in.

"If I had been at my post that day," he explains to his sobbing mother, "I should have been blown up, but the Providence that watches over good men had ordained that I should be lying blind-drunk in Blogg's saloon at the time the explosion took place, and so the other engineer, who had been doing my work when it was his turn to be off, was killed along with the whole of the crew."

"And thank Heaven, thank Heaven for that!" ejaculates the pious old lady, and the comic man is so overcome with devout joy that he has to relieve his overstrained heart by drawing his young woman on one side and grossly insulting her.

All attempts to kill this young man ought really to be given up now. The job has been tried over and over again by villains and bad people of all kinds, but no one has ever succeeded. There has been an amount of energy and ingenuity expended in seeking to lay up that one man which, properly utilized, might have finished off ten million ordinary mortals. It is sad to think of so much wasted effort.

He, the young man, coming home to see his girl, need never take an insurance ticket, or even buy a *Tit Bits*. It would be needless expenditure in his case.

On the other hand, and to make matters equal, as it were, there are some Stage people so delicate that it is next door to impossible to keep them alive.

The inconvenient husband is a most pathetic example of this. Medical science is powerless to save that man when the last act comes round; indeed, we doubt whether medical science, in its present state of development, could even tell what is the matter with him or why he dies at all. He looks healthy and robust enough, and nobody touches him, yet down he drops without a word of warning, stone-dead, in the middle of the floor—he always dies in the middle of the floor. Some folks

like to die in bed, but Stage people don't. They like to die on the floor. We all have our different tastes.

The adventuress herself is another person who dies with remarkable ease. We suppose, in her case, it is being so used to it that makes her so quick and clever at it. There is no lingering illness and doctor's bills, and upsetting of the whole household arrangements, about her method. One walk round the stage and the thing is done.

All bad characters die quickly on the stage. Good characters take a long time over it, and have a sofa down in the drawing-room to do it on, and have sobbing relatives and good old doctors fooling around them, and can smile and forgive everybody. Bad Stage characters have to do the whole job, dying, speech and all, in about ten seconds, and do it with all their clothes on into the bargain, which must make it most uncomfortable.

It is repentance that kills off the bad people in plays. They always repent, and the moment they repent they die. Repentance, on the stage, seems to be one of the most dangerous things a man can be taken with. Our advice to Stage wicked people would undoubtedly be, "Never repent. If you value your life, don't repent. It always mean sudden death!"

To return to our adventuress, she is by no means a bad woman. There is much good in her. This is more than proved by the fact that she learns to love the hero before she dies; for no one but a really good woman, capable of extraordinary patience and gentleness, could ever, we are convinced, grow to feel any other sentiment for that irritating ass than a desire to throw bricks at him.

The Stage adventuress would be a much better woman, too, if it were not for the heroine. The adventuress makes the most complete arrangements for being noble and self-sacrificing, that is for going away and

never coming back, and is just about to carry them out, when the heroine, who has a perfect genius for being in the wrong place at the right time, comes in and spoils it all. No Stage adventuress can be good while the heroine is about. The sight of the heroine rouses every bad feeling in her breast.

We can sympathize with her in this respect. The heroine often affects ourselves in precisely the same way.

There is a good deal to be said in favor of the adventuress. True, she possesses rather too much sarcasm and repartee to make things quite agreeable round the domestic hearth, and, when she has got all her clothes on, there is not much room left in the place for anybody else; but, taken on the whole, she is decidedly attractive. She has grit and go in her. She is alive. She can do something to help herself besides calling for "George."

She has not got a Stage child—if she ever had one, she has left it on somebody else's doorstep, which, presuming there was no water handy to drown it in, seems to be about the most sensible thing she could have done with it. She is not oppressively good.

She never wants to be "unhanded," or "let to pass." She is not always being shocked or insulted by people telling her that they love her; she does not seem to mind it if they do. She is not always fainting, and crying, and sobbing, and wailing, and moaning, like the good people in the play are.

Oh, they do have an unhappy time of it—the good people in plays! Then she is the only person in the piece who can sit on the comic man.

We sometimes think it would be a fortunate thing—for him—if they allowed her to marry and settle down quietly with the hero. She *might* make a man of him, in time.

CHAPTER VII

THE STAGE SERVANT GIRL

THERE are two types of servant girl to be met with on the stage. This is an unusual allowance for one profession.

There is the lodging-house slavey. She has a good heart, and a smutty face, and is always dressed according to the latest fashion in scarecrows.

Her leading occupation is the cleaning of boots.

She cleans boots all over the house, at all hours of the day. She comes and sits down on the hero's breakfast table, and cleans them over the poor fellow's food. She comes into the drawing-room cleaning boots.

She has her own method of cleaning them, too. She rubs off the mud, puts on the blacking, and polishes up all with the same brush. They take an enormous amount of polishing, she seems to do nothing else all day long but walk about shining one boot, and she breathes on it and rubs it till you wonder there is any leather left, yet it never seems to get any brighter, nor, indeed, can you expect it to, for when you look closely you see it is a patent leather boot that she has been throwing herself away upon all this time.

Somebody has been having a lark with the poor girl.

The lodging-house slavey brushes her hair with the boot brush, and blacks the end of her nose with it.

We were acquainted with a lodging-house slavey once—a real one, we mean. She was the handmaiden at a house in Bloomsbury, where we once hung out. She

was untidy in her dress, it is true, but she had not quite that castaway and gone-to-sleep-in-a-dust-bin appearance that we, an earnest student of the drama, felt she ought to present, and we questioned her one day on the subject.

"How is it, Sophronia," we said, "that you distantly resemble a human being instead of giving one the idea of an animated rag-shop? Don't you ever polish your nose with the blacking brush, or rub coal into your head, or wash your face in treacle, or put skewers into your hair, or anything of that sort, like they do on the stage?"

She said, "Lord love you, what should I want to go and be a bally idiot like that for?"

And we have not liked to put the question elsewhere since then.

The other type of servant girl on the stage—the villa servant girl—is a very different personage. She is a fetching little thing, and dresses bewitchingly, and is always clean. Her duties are to dust the legs of the chairs in the drawing-room. That is the only work she ever has to do, but it must be confessed she does that thoroughly. She never comes into the room without dusting the legs of these chairs, and she dusts them again before she goes out.

If anything ought to be free from dust in a stage house it should be the legs of the drawing-room chairs.

She is going to marry the man-servant, is the Stage servant girl, as soon as they have saved up sufficient out of their wages to buy an hotel. They think they will like to keep an hotel. They don't understand a bit about the business, which we believe is a complicated one, but this does not trouble them in the least.

They quarrel a good deal over their love-making, do the Stage servant girl and her young man, and they always come into the drawing-room to do it. They have got the kitchen, and there is the garden (with a

fountain and mountains in the background—you can see it through the window), but no! no place in or about the house is good enough for them to quarrel in except the drawing-room. They quarrel there so vigorously that it even interferes with the dusting of the chair legs.

She ought not to be long in saving up sufficient to marry on, for the generosity of people on the stage to the servants there makes one seriously consider the advisability of ignoring the unremunerative professions of ordinary life and starting a new and more promising career as a Stage servant.

No one ever dreams of tipping the Stage servant with *less* than a sovereign when they ask her if her mistress is at home or give her a letter to post, and there is quite a rush at the end of the piece to stuff five-pound notes into her hand. The good old man gives her ten.

The Stage servant is very impudent to her mistress, and the master—he falls in love with her, and it does upset the house so.

Sometimes the servant girl is good and faithful, and then she is Irish. All good servant girls on the Stage are Irish.

All the male visitors are expected to kiss the Stage servant girl when they come into the house, and to dig her in the ribs, and to say, "Do you know, Jane, I think you're an uncommonly nice girl—click." They always say this, and she likes it.

Many years ago, when we were young, we thought we would see if things were the same off the stage, and the next time we called at a certain friend's house we tried this business on.

She wasn't *quite* so dazzlingly beautiful as they are on the stage, but we passed that. She showed us up into the drawing-room, and then said she would go and tell her mistress we were there.

We felt this was the time to begin. We skipped be-

tween her and the door. We held our hat in front of us, and cocked our head on one side, and said, "Don't go! don't go!"

The girl seemed alarmed. We began to get a little nervous ourselves, but we had begun it, and we meant to go through with it.

We said, "Do you know, Jane" (her name wasn't Jane, but that wasn't our fault), "do you know, Jane, I think you're an uncommonly nice girl," and we said "click," and dug her in the ribs with our elbow, and then chucked her under the chin. The whole thing seemed to fall flat. There was nobody there to laugh or applaud. We wished we hadn't done it. It seemed stupid, when you came to think of it. We began to feel frightened. The business wasn't going as we expected; but we screwed up our courage, and went on.

We put on the customary expression of comic imbecility and beckoned the girl to us. We have never seen this fail on the stage.

But this girl seemed made wrong. She got behind the sofa and screamed "Help!"

We have never known them to do this on the stage, and it threw us out in our plans. We did not know exactly what to do. We regretted that we had ever begun this job, and heartily wished ourselves out of it. But it appeared foolish to pause then, when we were more than half way through, and we made a rush to get it over.

We chivied the girl round the sofa and caught her near the door and kissed her. She scratched our face, yelled police, murder, and fire, and fled from the room.

Our friend came in almost immediately. He said:

"I say, J., old man, are you drunk?"

We told him no, that we were only a student of the drama.

His wife then entered in a towering passion. She didn't ask us if we were drunk. She said:

"How dare you come here in this state!"

We endeavored, unsuccessfully, to induce her to believe that we were sober; and we explained that our course of conduct was what was always pursued on the stage.

She said she didn't care what was done on the stage, it wasn't going to be pursued in her house and that if her husband's friends couldn't behave as gentlemen they had better stop away.

A few more chatty remarks were exchanged, and then we took our leave.

The following morning we received a letter from a firm of solicitors in Lincoln's Inn with reference, so they put it, to the brutal and unprovoked assault committed by us on the previous afternoon upon the person of their client, Miss Matilda Hemmings. The letter stated that we had punched Miss Hemmings in the side, struck her under the chin, and, afterwards, seizing her as she was leaving the room, proceeded to commit a gross assault, into the particulars of which it was needless for them to enter at greater length.

It added that if we were prepared to render an ample written apology, and to pay fifty pounds compensation, they would advise their client, Miss Matilda Hemmings, to allow the matter to drop, otherwise criminal proceedings would at once be commenced against us.

We took the letter to our own solicitors, and explained the circumstances to them. They said it seemed to be a very sad case, but advised us to pay the fifty pounds, and we borrowed the money, and did so.

Since then we have lost faith, somehow, in the British drama as a guide to the conduct of life.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STAGE CHILD

IT is nice and quiet and it talks pretty.

We have come across real infants, now and then, in the course of visits to married friends; they have been brought to us from outlying parts of the house, and introduced to us for our edification; and we have found them gritty and sticky. Their boots have usually been muddy, and they have wiped them up against our new trousers. And their hair has suggested the idea that they have been standing on their heads in the dust-bin.

And they have talked to us—but not pretty, not at all—rather rude we should call it.

But the Stage child is very different. It is clean and tidy. You can touch it anywhere and nothing comes off. Its face glows with soap and water. From the appearance of its hands it is evident that mud pies and tar are joys unknown to it. As for its hair, there is something uncanny about its smoothness and respectability. Even its boot laces are done up.

We have never seen anything like the Stage child, outside a theater, excepting once—that was on the pavement in front of a tailor's shop in Tottenham Court Road. He stood on a bit of round wood, and it was fifteen and nine, his style.

We thought, in our ignorance, prior to this, that there could not be anything in the world like the Stage child, but you see we were mistaken. The Stage child is affectionate to its parents, and its nurse; and is respectful

in its demeanor towards those whom Providence has placed in authority over it; and so far, it is certainly much to be preferred to the real article. It speaks of its male and female progenitors as "dear, dear papa," and "dear, dear mamma," and it refers to its nurse as "darling nursey." We are connected with a youthful child ourselves—a real one—a nephew. He alludes to his father (when his father is *not* present) as "the old man"; and always calls the nurse "old nutcrackers." Why cannot they make real children who say "dear, dear mamma," and "dear, dear papa."

The Stage child is much superior to the live infant in every way. The Stage child does not go rampaging about a house and screeching and yelling, till nobody knows whether they are on their head or their heels.

A Stage child does not get up at five o'clock in the morning to practice playing on a penny whistle. A Stage child never wants a bicycle, and drives you mad about it. A Stage child does not ask twenty complicated questions a minute about things that you don't understand, and then wind up by asking why you don't seem to know anything, and why wouldn't anybody teach you anything when you were a little boy.

The Stage child does not wear out a hole in the seat of its knickerbockers, and have to have a patch let it. The Stage child comes down stairs on its *feet*.

The Stage child never brings home six other children to play at horses in the front garden, and then wants to know if they can all come in to tea.

The Stage child never has the whooping cough, and the measles, and every other disease that it can lay its hands on, and be laid up with them one after the other, and turn the house upside down.

The Stage child's department in the scheme of life is to harrow up its mother's feelings by ill-timed and uncalled for questions about its father.

It always wants to know, before a roomful of people, where "dear papa" is, and why he has left dear mamma; when, as all the guests know, the poor man is doing his two years' hard, or waiting to be hanged.

It makes everybody so uncomfortable.

It is always harrowing up somebody—the Stage child,—it really ought not to be left about, as it is. When it has done upsetting its mother, it fishes out some broken-hearted maid, who has just been cruelly severed forever from her lover, and asks her in a high falsetto voice why she doesn't get married, and prattles to her about love, and domestic bliss, and young men, and any other subject it can think of, particularly calculated to lacerate the poor girl's heart, until her brain nearly gives way.

After that, it runs amuck, up and down the whole play, and makes everybody sit up, all round. It asks eminently respectable old maids if they wouldn't like to have a baby; and it wants to know why baldheaded old men have left off wearing hair, and why other old gentlemen have red noses, and if they were always that color.

In some plays, it so happens that the less said about the origin and source of the Stage child the better; and, in such cases, nothing will appear so important to that contrary brat as to know, in the middle of an evening party, who its father was!

Everybody loves the Stage child. They catch it up in their bosoms every other minute and weep over it. They take it in turns to do this.

Nobody—on the stage, we mean—ever has enough of the Stage child. Nobody ever tells the Stage child to "shut up," or to "get out of this." Nobody ever clumps the Stage child over the head.

When the real child goes to the theatre it must notice these things, and wish *it* were a Stage child.

The Stage child is much admired by the audience. Its pathos makes them weep; its tragedy thrills them; its declamation, as, for instance, when it takes the centre of the stage, and says it will kill the wicked man, and the police, and everybody who hurts its mar, stirs them like a trumpet note; and its light comedy is generally held to be the most truly humorous thing in the whole range of dramatic art.

But there are some people so strangely constituted that they do not appreciate the Stage child; they do not comprehend its uses; they do not understand its beauties.

We should not be angry with them. We should the rather pity them.

We ourselves had a friend once who suffered from this misfortune. He was a married man, and Providence had been very gracious, very good to him: he had been blessed with eleven children, and they were all growing up well and strong.

The "baby" was eleven weeks old, and then came the twins, who were getting on for fifteen months, and were cutting their double teeth nicely. The youngest girl was three, and there were five boys aged seven, eight, nine, ten, and twelve, respectively—good enough lads, but—well there, boys will be boys, you know; we were just the same ourselves when we were young. The two eldest were both very pleasant girls, as their mother said, the only pity was that they would quarrel so with each other.

We never knew a healthier set of boys and girls. They were so full of energy and dash.

Our friend was very much out of sorts one evening when we called on him. It was holiday time, and wet weather. He had been at home all day, and so had all the children. He was telling his wife, when we entered the room, that if the holidays were to last much longer and those twins did not hurry up and get their teeth

quickly, he should have to go away and join the County Council. He could not stand the racket.

His wife said she could not see what he had to complain of. She was sure better-hearted children no man could have.

Our friend said he didn't care about their hearts.

It was their legs, and arms, and lungs that were driving him crazy.

He also said that he would go out with us and get away from it for a bit, or he should go mad.

He proposed a theatre, and we accordingly made our way towards the Strand. Our friend, in closing the door behind him, said he could not tell us what a relief it was to get away from those children. He said he loved children very much indeed, but that it was a mistake to have too much of anything, however much you liked it, and that he had come to the conclusion that twenty-two hours a day of them was enough for anyone.

He said he did not want to see another child or hear another child until he got home. He wanted to forget that there were such things as children in the world.

We got up to the Strand and dropped into the first theatre we came to. The curtain was up, and on the stage was a small child standing in its nightshirt and screaming for its mother.

Our friend looked, said one word and bolted, and we followed.

We went a little further, and dropped into another theatre. There, there were *two* children on the stage. Some grown-up people were standing round them listening, in respectful attitudes, while the children talked. They appeared to be lecturing about something.

Again we fled, swearing, and made our way to a third theatre. They were *all* children there. It was somebody or other's Children's Company performing an opera, or pantomime, or something of that sort.

Our friend said he would not venture in another theatre. He said he had heard there were places called music halls, and he begged us to take him to one of these, and not to tell his wife.

We enquired of a policeman and found that there really were such places, and we took him into one.

The first thing we saw were two little boys doing tricks on a horizontal bar.

Our friend was about to repeat his customary programme of flying and cursing, but we restrained him. We assured him that he really would see a grown-up person if he waited a bit, so he sat out the boys and also their little sister on a bicycle, and waited for the next item.

It turned out to be an infant phenomenon who sang and danced in fourteen different costumes, and we once more fled.

Our friend said he could not go home in the state he was then; he felt sure he should kill the twins if he did. He pondered for a while, and then he thought he would go and hear some music. He said he thought a little music would soothe and ennoble him—make him feel more like a Christian than he did at that precise moment.

We were near St. James's Hall, so we went in there.

The hall was densely crowded, and we had great difficulty in forcing our way to our seats. We reached them at length, and then turned our eyes towards the orchestra.

"The marvelous boy pianist—only ten years old!" was giving a recital. Then our friend rose and said he thought he would give it up and go home.

We asked him if he would like to try any other place of amusement, but he said, "No." He said that, when you came to think of it, it seemed a waste of money for a man with eleven children of his own to go about to places of entertainment nowadays.

CHAPTER IX

THE STAGE COMIC LOVERS

OH, they *are* funny! The comic lovers' mission in life is to serve as a sort of "relief" to the misery caused the audience by the other characters in the play; and all that is wanted now is something that will be a relief to the comic lovers.

They have nothing to do with the play, but they come on immediately after anything very sad has happened, and make love. This is why we watch sad scenes on the stage with such patience. We are not eager for them to be got over. May be, they are very uninteresting scenes, as well as sad ones, and they make us yawn; but we have no desire to see them hurried through. The longer they take, the better pleased we are: we know that, when they are finished, the comic lovers will come on.

They are always very rude to one another, the comic lovers. Everybody is more or less rude and insulting to everybody else, on the stage; they call it repartee there! We tried the effect of a little Stage "repartee" once, upon some people in real life, and we wished we hadn't, afterwards. It was too subtle for them. They summoned us before a magistrate for "using language calculated to cause a breach of the peace." We were fined two pounds, and costs!

They are more lenient to "wit and humor" on the stage, and know how to encourage the art of vituperation. But the comic lovers carry the practice almost to

excess. They are more than rude, they are abusive. They insult each other from morning to night. What their married life will be like, we shudder to think.

In the various slanging matches and bullyragging competitions, which form their courtship, it is always the maiden that is most successful. Against her merry flow of invective, and her girlish wealth of offensive personalities, the insolence and abuse of her boyish adorer cannot stand for one moment.

To give an idea of how the comic lovers woo, we, perhaps, cannot do better than subjoin the following brief example:—

Scene: Main thoroughfare in populous district of London. Time: Noon. Not a soul to be seen anywhere.

Enter comic loveress R., *walking in the middle of the road.*

Enter comic lover L., *also walking in the middle of the road.*

They neither see the other one, until they bump against each other in the centre.

He. Why, Jane! Who'd a' thought o' meeting *you* here!

She. You evidently didn't—stoopid!

He. Hulloa! got out o' bed the wrong side again. I say, Jane, if you go on like that, you'll never get a man to marry you.

She. So I thought, when I engaged myself to *you.*

He. Oh! come Jane, don't be hard.

She. Well, one of us must be hard. *You're* soft enough.

He. Yes, I shouldn't want to marry you, if I weren't. Ha! ha! ha!

She. Oh, you gibbering idiot (*said archly*).

He. So glad I am. We shall make a capital match (*attempts to kiss her*).

She (*slipping away*). Yes, and you'll find I'm a match that can strike (*fetches him a violent blow over the side of the head*).

He (*holding his jaw—in a literal sense, we mean*). I can't help feeling smitten by her.

She. Yes, I'm a bit of a spanker, ain't I?

He. Spanker! *I* call you a regular stunner. You've nearly made me silly.

She (*laughing playfully*). No, nature did that for you, Joe, long ago.

He. Ah, well, you've made me *smart* enough now. You boss-eyed old cow, you!

She. Cow! am I? Ah, I suppose that's what makes me so fond of a *calf!* You German sausage on legs! You—

He. Go along. Your mother brought you up on sour milk.

She. Yah! They weaned you on thistles, didn't they?

And so on, with such like badinage do they hang about in the middle of that road, showering derision and contumely upon each other for full ten minutes, when, with one culminating burst of mutual abuse, they go off together fighting; and the street is left once more, deserted.

It is very curious, by-the-bye, how deserted all public places become whenever a stage character is about. It would seem as though ordinary citizens sought to avoid them. We have known a couple of Stage villains to have Waterloo Bridge, Lancaster Place, and a bit of the Strand entirely to themselves, for nearly a quarter of an hour on a summer's afternoon, while they plotted a most diabolical outrage.

As for Trafalgar Square, the hero always chooses that spot when he wants to get away from the busy crowd and commune, in solitude, with his own bitter thoughts; and the good old lawyer leaves his office and

goes there to discuss any very delicate business over which he particularly does not wish to be disturbed.

And they all make speeches there to an extent sufficient to have turned the hair of the late lamented Sir Charles Warren white with horror. But it is all right, because there is nobody near to hear them. As far as the eye can reach, not a living thing is to be seen. Northumberland Avenue, the Strand, and St. Martin's Lane are simply a wilderness. The only sign of life about is a bus at the top of Whitehall, and it appears to be blocked. How it has managed to get blocked, we cannot say. It has the whole road to itself; and is, in fact, itself the only traffic for miles round. Yet there it sticks for hours. The police make no attempt to move it on, and the passengers seem quite contented.

The Thames Embankment is an even still more lonesome and desolate part. Wounded (stage) spirits fly from the haunts of men, and, leaving the hard, cold world far, far behind them, go and die in peace on the Thames Embankment. And other wanderers, finding their skeletons afterwards, bury them there, and put up rude crosses over the graves to mark the spot.

The comic lovers are often very young; and, when people on the stage are young, they *are* young. He is supposed to be about sixteen, and she is fifteen. But they both talk as if they were not more than seven.

In real life, "boys" of sixteen know a thing or two, we have generally found. The average "boy" of sixteen, nowadays, usually smokes cavendish, and does a little on the Stock Exchange, or makes a book: and, as for love! he has quite got over it by that age. On the stage, however, the new born babe is not in it for innocence with the boy lover of sixteen.

So, too, with the maiden. Most girls of fifteen, of the stage, so our experience goes, know as much as there is any actual necessity for them to know, Mr.

Gilbert, notwithstanding; but when we see a young lady of fifteen on the stage, we wonder where her cradle is.

The comic lovers do not have the facilities for love making that the hero and heroine do. The hero and heroine have big rooms to make love in, with a fire and plenty of easy chairs, so that they can sit about in picturesque attitudes, and do it comfortably. Or if they want to do it out of doors, they have a ruined abbey, with a big stone seat in the center, and moonlight.

The comic lovers, on the other hand, have to do it, standing up all the time, in busy streets, or in cheerless-looking and curiously narrow rooms, in which there is no furniture whatever, and no fire.

And there is always a tremendous row going on in the house when the comic lovers are making love. Somebody always seems to be putting up pictures in the next room, and putting them up boisterously, too; so that the comic lovers have to shout at each other.

CHAPTER X

THE STAGE PEASANTS

THEY are so clean. We have seen peasantry off the stage, and it has presented an untidy—occasionally a disreputable and unwashed appearance; but the Stage peasant seems to spend all his wages on soap and hair oil.

They are always round the corner—or rather round the two corners—and they come on in a couple of streams, and meet in the center; and, when they are in their proper position, they smile.

There is nothing like the Stage peasant's smile in this world—nothing so perfectly inane, so calmly imbecile.

They are so happy. They don't look it, but we know they are, because they say so. If you don't believe them, they dance three steps to the right and three steps to the left back again. They can't help it. It is because they are so happy.

When they are more than usually rollicking, they stand in a semi-circle, with their hands on each other's shoulders, and sway from side to side, trying to make themselves sick. But this is only when they are simply bursting with joy.

Stage peasants never have any work to do. Sometimes we see them going to work, sometimes coming home from work, but nobody has ever seen them actually *at* work. They could not afford to work, it would spoil their clothes.

They are very sympathetic, are Stage peasants. They never seem to have any affairs of their own to think

about, but they make up for this by taking a three hundred horse-power interest in things in which they have no earthly concern.

What particularly rouses them is the heroine's love affairs. They could listen to that all day.

They yearn to hear what she said to him, and to be told what he replied to her, and they repeat it to each other.

In our own love-sick days, we often used to go and relate to various people all the touching conversations that took place between *our* ladylove and ourselves; but *our* friends never seemed to get excited over it. On the contrary, a casual observer might even have been led to the idea that they were bored by our recital. And they had trains to catch, and men to meet, before we had got a quarter through the job.

Ah, how often, in those days, have we yearned for the sympathy of a Stage peasantry, who would have crowded round us, eager not to miss one word of the thrilling narrative; who would have rejoiced with us with an encouraging laugh, and have condoled with us with a grieved "Oh," and who would have gone off, when we had had enough of them, singing about it.

By the way, this is a very beautiful trait in the character of the Stage peasantry—their prompt and unquestioning compliance with the slightest wish of any of the principals.

"Leave me, friends," says the heroine, beginning to make preparations for weeping, and, before she can turn round they are clean gone—one lot to the right, evidently making for the back entrance of the public house, and the other half to the left, where they visibly hide themselves behind the pump and wait till somebody else wants them.

The Stage peasantry do not talk much, their strong point being to listen. When they cannot get any more

information about the state of the heroine's heart, they like to be told long and complicated stories about wrongs done years ago to people that they never heard of. They seem to be able to grasp and understand these stories with ease. This makes the audience envious of them.

When the Stage peasantry do talk, however, they soon make up for lost time. They start off all together with a suddenness that nearly knocks you over.

They *all* talk. Nobody listens. Watch any two of them. They are both talking as hard as they can go. They have been listening quite enough to other people; you can't expect them to listen to each other. But the conversation, under such conditions, must be very trying.

And then they flirt so sweetly! so idyllicly!

It has been our privilege to see real peasantry flirt, and it has always struck us as a singularly solid and substantial affair—makes one think, somehow, of a steam roller flirting with a cow—but on the stage it is so sylph-like. *She* has short skirts, and her stockings are so much tidier and better fitting than these things are in real peasant life; and she is arch and coy. She turns away from him and laughs—such a silvery laugh.

And he is ruddy and curly haired, and has on such a beautiful waistcoat! how can she help but love him? And he is so tender and devoted, and holds her by the waist; and she slips round and comes up the other side. Oh, it is so bewitching.

The Stage peasantry like to do their love-making as much in public as possible. Some people fancy a place all to themselves for this sort of thing—where nobody else is about. We ourselves do. But the Stage peasant is more sociably inclined. Give him the village green, just outside the public house, or the square, on market day, to do his spooning in.

They are very faithful, are Stage peasants. No jilting, no fickleness, no breach of promise. If the gentle-

man in pink walks out with the lady in blue in the first act, pink and blue will be married in the end. He sticks to her all through, and she sticks to him.

Girls in yellow may come and go; girls in green may laugh and dance; the gentleman in pink heeds them not. Blue is his color, and he never leaves it. He stands beside it, he sits beside it. He drinks with her, he smiles with her, he laughs with her, he dances with her, he comes on with her, he goes off with her.

When the time comes for talking, he talks to her and only her; and she talks to him and only him. Thus there is no jealousy, no quarreling.

But we should prefer an occasional change ourselves.

There are no married people in Stage villages, and no children (consequently, of course—happy village, oh, to discover it, and spend a month there!) There are just the same number of men as there are women in all Stage villages, and they are all about the same age and each young man loves some young woman. But they never marry.

They talk a lot about it, but they never do it. The artful beggars! They see too much what it's like among the principals.

The Stage peasant is fond of drinking, and, when he drinks, he likes to let you know he is drinking. None of your quiet half-pint inside the bar for him. He likes to come out in the street and sing about it, and do tricks with it, such as turning it topsy-turvey over his head.

But, notwithstanding all this, he is moderate, mind you. You can't say he takes too much. One small jug of ale among forty is his usual allowance.

He has a keen sense of humor, and is easily amused. There is something almost pathetic about the way he goes into convulsions of laughter over such very small jokes. How a man like that would enjoy a real joke!

One day he will, perhaps, hear a real joke. Who knows?

It will, however, probably kill him.

One grows to love the Stage peasant after a while. He is so good, so childlike, so unworldly. He realizes one's ideal of Christianity.

CHAPTER XI

THE STAGE GOOD OLD MAN

HE has lost his wife. But he knows where she is—among the angels!

She isn't all gone, because the heroine has her hair. "Ah, you've got your mother's hair," says the good old man, feeling the girl's head all over, as she kneels beside him. Then they all wipe away a tear.

The people on the stage think very highly of the good old man, but they don't encourage him much, after the first act. He generally dies in the first act.

If he does not seem likely to die, they murder him.

He is a most unfortunate old gentleman. Anything he is mixed up in seems bound to go wrong. If he is manager or director of a bank, smash it goes before even one act is over. His particular firm is always on the verge of bankruptcy. We have only to be told that he has put all his savings into a company—no matter how sound and promising an affair it may always have been, and may still seem—to know that that company is a "gone-er."

No power on earth can save it, after once the good old man has become a shareholder.

If we lived in Stage-land, and were asked to join any financial scheme, our first question would be: "Is the good old man in it?" If so, that would decide us.

When the good old man is a trustee for anyone, he can battle against adversity much longer. He is a plucky old fellow, and, while that trust money lasts, he

keeps a brave heart and fights on boldly. It is not until he has spent the last penny of it that he gives way.

It then flashes across the old man's mind that his motives for having lived in luxury upon that trust money for years may possibly be misunderstood. The world—the hollow, heartless world—will call it a swindle, and regard him generally as a precious old fraud.

This idea quite troubles the good old man.

But the world really ought not to blame him. No one, we are sure, could be more ready and willing to make amends (when found out); and, to put matters right, he will cheerfully sacrifice his daughter's happiness and marry her to the villain.

The villain, by the way, has never a penny to bless himself with, and cannot even pay his own debts, let alone helping anybody else out of a scrape. But the good old man does not think of this.

Our own personal theory, based upon a careful comparison of similarities, is that the good old man is in reality the Stage hero, grown old. There is something about the good old man's chuckle-headed simplicity, about his helpless imbecility, and his irritating damtom foolishness, that is strangely suggestive of the hero.

He is just the sort of old man that we should imagine the hero *would* develop into.

We may, of course, be wrong; but that is our idea.

CHAPTER XII

THE STAGE IRISHMAN

HE says "Shure," and "Bedad," and, in moments of exultation, "Beghorra." That is all the Irish he knows.

He is very poor, but scrupulously honest. His great ambition is to pay his rent, and he is devoted to his landlord.

He is always cheerful and always good. We never knew a bad Irishman, on the stage. Sometimes a Stage Irishman *seems* to be a bad man—such as the "agent," or the "informer"—but, in these cases, it invariably turns out, in the end, that this man was all along a Scotchman, and thus what had been a mystery becomes clear and explicable.

The Stage Irishman is always doing the most wonderful things imaginable. We do not see him do these wonderful things. He does them when nobody is by, and tells us all about them afterwards: that is how we know of them.

We remember, on one occasion, when we were young and somewhat inexperienced, planking our money down, and going into a theatre solely and purposely to see the Stage Irishman do the things he was depicted as doing on the posters outside.

They were really marvelous, the things he did on that poster.

In the right hand upper corner he appeared running across country on all fours, with a red herring sticking out from his coat tails, while, far behind, came hounds

and horsemen, hunting him. But their chance of ever catching him was clearly hopeless.

To the left, he was represented as running away over one of the wildest and most rugged bits of landscape we have ever seen, with a very big man on his back. Six policemen stood scattered about a mile behind him. They had evidently been running after him, but had, at last, given up the pursuit as useless.

In the centre of the poster he was having a friendly fight with seventeen other ladies and gentlemen. Judging from the costumes, the affair appeared to be a wedding. A few of the guests have already been killed and lay dead about the floor. The survivors, however, were enjoying themselves immensely, and of all that gay group he was the gayest.

At the moment chosen by the artist he had just succeeded in cracking the bridegroom's skull.

"We must see this," said we to ourselves. "This is good." And we had a bob's worth.

But he did not do any of the things that we have mentioned, after all—at least, we mean, we did not see him do any of them. It seems he did them "off," and then came on and told his mother all about it afterwards.

He told it very well, but, somehow or other, we were disappointed. We had so reckoned on that fight.

(By-the-bye, we have noticed, even among the characters of real life, a tendency to perform most of their wonderful feats "off.")

It has been our privilege, since then, to gaze upon many posters, on which have been delineated strange and moving stage events.

We have seen the hero, holding the villain up high above his head and throwing him about that carelessly that we have felt afraid he would break something with him.

We have seen a heroine leaping from the roof of a house on one side of the street, and being caught by the comic man, standing on the roof of a house the other side of the street, and thinking nothing of it.

We have seen railway trains rushing into each other at the rate of sixty miles an hour. We have seen houses blown up by dynamite two hundred feet into the air. We have seen the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the destruction of Pompeii, and the return of the British Army from Egypt in one "set" each.

Such incidents as earthquakes, wrecks in mid-ocean, revolutions and battles, we take no note of; they being commonplace and ordinary.

But we do not go inside to see these things now. We have two looks at the poster instead; it is more satisfying.

The Irishman, to return to our friend, is very fond of whisky—the Stage Irishman we mean. Whisky is forever in his thoughts—and often in other places belonging to him besides. It is currently reported that it was the child of a Stage Irishman who, after listening to an eloquent sermon on the text: "Wist ye not I must be about my Father's business!" reported at home that the preacher had been telling them about a man who always called for "Whisky hot!" whenever he went about any business for his father.

The fashion in dress among Stage Irishmen is rather picturesque than neat. Tailors must have a hard time of it in Stage Ireland.

The Stage Irishman has also an original taste in hats. He always wears a hat without a crown; whether to keep his head cool, or with any political significance, we cannot say.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STAGE DETECTIVE

AH! he is a 'cute one he is.

Possibly in real life he would not be deemed anything extraordinary; but by contrast with the average of Stage men and women any one who is not a born fool naturally appears somewhat Machiavelian.

He is the only man in the play who does not swallow all the villain tells him and believe it, and come up with his mouth open for more. He is the only man who can see through the disguise of an overcoat and a new hat.

There is something very wonderful about the disguising power of cloaks and hats upon the stage. This comes from the habit people on the stage have of recognizing their friends, not by their faces and voices, but by their cloaks and hats.

A married man, on the stage, knows his wife because he knows she wears a blue ulster and a red bonnet. The moment she leaves off that blue ulster and red bonnet he is lost, and does not know where she is.

She puts on a yellow cloak and a green hat, and, coming in at another door, says she is a lady from the country, and does he want a housekeeper?

Having lost his beloved wife, and, feeling that there is no one now to keep the children quiet, he engages her. She puzzles him a good deal, this new housekeeper. There is something about her that strangely reminds him of his darling Nell; may be, her boots and dress, which she has not had time to change.

Sadly the slow acts pass away until one day, as it is getting near closing time, she puts on the blue ulster and the red bonnet again and comes in at the old, original door.

Then he recognizes her, and asks her where she has been all these cruel years!

Even the bad people, who, as a rule, do possess a little sense—indeed, they are the only persons, in the play, who ever pretend to any—are deceived by singularly thin disguises.

The detective comes in to their secret councils, with his hat drawn down over his eyes, and, followed by the hero, speaking in a squeaky voice; and the villains mistake them for members of the band and tell them all their plans.

If the villains can't get themselves found out that way, then they go into a public tea-garden and recount their crimes to one another in a loud tone of voice.

They evidently think that it is only fair to give the detective a chance.

The detective must not be confounded with the policeman. The Stage policeman is always on the side of the villain; the detective backs virtue.

The Stage detective is, in fact, the earthly agent of a discerning and benevolent Providence. He stands by and allows vice to be triumphant and the good people to be persecuted, for a while, without interference. Then when he considers that we have all had about enough of it (to which conclusion, by-the-bye, he arrives somewhat late), he comes forward, handcuffs the bad people, sorts out and gives back to the good people all their various estates and wives, promises the chief villain twenty years penal servitude, and all is joy.

CHAPTER XIV

THE STAGE SAILOR

He does suffer so with his trousers. He has to stop and pull them up about every minute.

One of these days, if he is not careful, there will be an accident happen to those trousers.

If the Stage sailor will follow our advice, he will be warned in time and will get a pair of braces.

Sailors, in real life, do not have nearly so much trouble with their trousers as sailors on the stage do. Why is this? We have seen a good deal of sailors in real life, but on only one occasion that we can remember did we ever see a real sailor pull his trousers up.

And then he did not do it a bit like they do on the stage.

The Stage sailor places his right hand behind him and his left in front, leaps up into the air, kicks out his legs behind in a gay and bird-like way, and the thing is done.

The real sailor that we saw began by saying a bad word. Then he leaned up against a brick wall and undid his belt, pulled up his "bags," as he stood there (he never attempted to leap up into the air), tucked in his jersey, shook his legs, and walked on.

It was a most unpicturesque performance to watch.

The thing that the Stage sailor most craves in this life is that somebody should shiver his timbers.

"Shiver my timbers!" is the request he makes to every one he meets. But nobody ever does it.

His chief desire with regard to the other people in

the play is that they should "belay there, avast!" We do not know how this is done; but the Stage sailor is a good and kindly man, and we feel convinced he would not recommend the exercise if it were not conducive to piety and health.

The Stage sailor is good to his mother, and dances the hornpipe beautifully. We have never found a real sailor who could dance a hornpipe, though we have made extensive inquiries throughout the profession. We were introduced to a ship's steward, who offered to do us a cellar-flap for a pot of four-half; but that was not what we wanted.

The Stage sailor is gay and rollicking; the real sailors we have met have been, some of them, the most worthy and single-minded of men, but they have appeared sedate rather than gay, and they hav'n't rollicked much.

The Stage sailor seems to have an easy time of it when at sea. The hardest work we have ever seen him do then has been folding up a rope or dusting the sides of the ship.

But it is only in his very busy moments that he has to work to this extent; most of his time is occupied in chatting with the captain.

By the way. speaking of the sea, few things are more remarkable in their behavior than a Stage sea. It must be difficult to navigate in a Stage sea, the currents are so confusing.

As for the waves, there is no knowing how to steer for them; they are so tricky. At one moment they are all on the larboard, the sea on the other side of the vessel being perfectly calm, and, the next instant, they have crossed over and are all on the starboard, and, before the captain can think how to meet this new dodge, the whole ocean has slid round and got itself up into a heap at the back of him.

Seamanship is useless against such very unprofessional conduct as this, and the vessel is wrecked.

A wreck at (Stage) sea is a truly awful sight. The thunder and lightning never leave off for an instant; the crew run round and round the mast and scream; the heroine, carrying the Stage child in her arms, and with her back hair down, rushes about and gets in everybody's way. The comic man alone is calm!

The next instant, the bulwarks fall down flat on the deck, and the mast goes straight up into the sky and disappears; then the water reaches the powder magazine and there is a terrific explosion.

This is followed by a sound as of linen sheets being ripped up, and the passengers and crew hurry downstairs into the cabin, evidently with the idea of getting out of the way of the sea, which has climbed up and is now level with the deck. The next moment, the vessel separates in the middle and goes off R. and L. so as to make room for a small boat containing the heroine, the child, the comic man, and one sailor.

The way small boats are managed at (Stage) sea is even more wonderful than the way in which ships are sailed.

To begin with, everybody sits sideways along the middle of the boat, all facing the starboard. They do not attempt to row. One man does all the work with one scull. This scull he puts down through the water till it touches the bed of the ocean, and then he shoves.

"Deep sea punting" would be the technical term for the method, we presume.

In this way do they toil—or rather, to speak correctly, does the one man toil—through the awful night, until with joy they see before them the lighthouse rocks.

The lighthouse keeper comes out with a lantern, the boat is run in among the breakers, and all are saved!

And then the band plays.

THE RIVALS

Dramatis Personæ

As Originally Acted at Covent Garden Theatre, in 1775.

Sir Anthony Absolute	Mr. Shuter
Captain Absolute	Mr. Woodward
Faulkland	Mr. Lewis
Acres	Mr. Quick
Sir Lucius O'Trigger	Mr. Lee
Fag	Mr. Lee Lewes
David	Mr. Dunstal
Thomas	Mr. Fearon
Mrs. Malaprop	Mrs. Green
Lydia Languish	Miss Barsanti
Julia	Mrs. Bulkley
Lucy	Mrs. Lessingham

Scene: Bath.

Portrait of Richard Brinsley Sheridan

THE RIVALS

By Richard Brinsley Sheridan

ACT I

Scene I.—*A Street in Bath*

Enter Coachman *and* Fag *meeting*

Fag. What! Thomas!—Sure, 'tis he!—What, Thomas! Thomas!

Coach. Hey? odds life!—Mr. Fag! give us your hand, my old fellow-servant.

Fag. Excuse my glove, Thomas; I'm devilish glad to see you, my lad! Why, my prince of charioteers, you look as hearty!—but who the deuce thought of seeing you in Bath?

Coach. Sure, master, Madam Julia, Harry, Mrs. Kate, and the postillion, be all come.

Fag. Indeed!

Coach. Ay: master thought another fit of gout was coming to make him a visit, so he'd a mind to gi't the slip—and whip! we were all off at an hour's warning.

Fag. Ay, ay; hasty in everything or it would not be Sir Anthony Absolute.

Coach. But tell us, Mr. Fag, how does young master? Odds! Sir Anthony will stare to see the captain here!

Fag. I do not serve Captain Absolute now.

Coach. Why, sure!

Fag. At present, I am employed by Ensign Beverley.

Coach. I doubt, Mr. Fag, you ha'n't changed for the better.

Fag. I have not changed, Thomas.

Coach. No! why, didn't you say you had left young master?

Fag. No. Well, honest Thomas, I must puzzle you no farther; briefly, then Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley are one and the same person.

Coach. The devil they are!

Fag. So it is indeed, Thomas; and the ensign half of my master being on guard at present—the captain has nothing to do with me.

Coach. So, so!—What, this is some freak, I warrant! Do tell us, Mr. Fag, the meaning o't—you know I ha' trusted you.

Fag. You'll be secret, Thomas?

Coach. As a coach-horse.

Fag. Why, then, the cause of all this is Love—Love, Thomas, who (you may get read to you) has been a masquerader ever since the days of Jupiter.

Coach. Ay, ay;—I guessed there was a lady in the case! But, pray, why does your master pass only for ensign? Now, if he had shammed general, indeed—

Fag. Ah, Thomas! there lies the mystery of the matter.—Hark ye, Thomas: my master is in love with a lady of a very singular taste—a lady, who likes him better as a half-pay ensign, than if she knew he was son and heir to Sir Anthony Absolute, a baronet of three thousand a-year.

Coach. That is an odd taste, indeed! But has she got the stuff, Mr. Fag? is she rich, eh?

Fag. Rich! Why, I believe she owns half the stocks! Zounds, Thomas, she could pay the national debt as easily as I could my washerwoman! She has a lap-dog that

eats out of gold,—she feeds her parrot with small pearls,—and all her thread-papers are made of bank-notes!

Coach. Bravo, faith! Odd! I warrant she has a set of thousands, at least! But does she draw kindly with the captain?

Fag. As fond as pigeons.

Coach. May one hear her name?

Fag. Miss Lydia Languish;—but there is an old tough aunt in the way—though, by-the-bye, she has never seen my master, for we got acquainted with miss while on a visit to Gloucestershire.

Coach. Well, I wish they were once harnessed together in matrimony. But pray, Mr. Fag, what kind of a place is this Bath? I ha' heard a deal of it. Here's a mort o' merry-making, eh?

Fag. Pretty well, Thomas, pretty well; 'tis a good lounge; in the morning we go to the pumproom (though neither my master nor I drink the waters); after breakfast we saunter on the parades, or play a game at billiards; at night we dance—but damn the place, I'm tired of it: their regular hours stupefy me—not a fiddle or a card after eleven! However, Mr. Faulkland's gentleman and I keep it up a little in private parties. I'll introduce you there, Thomas; you'll like him much.

Coach. Sure I know Mr. Du Peigne; you know his master is to marry Madam Julia.

Fag. I had forgot.—But, Thomas, you must polish a little—indeed, you must. Here now—this wig! What the devil do you do with a wig, Thomas? None of the London whips, of any degree of ton, wear wigs now.

Coach. More's the pity! more's the pity! I say, Mr. Fag. Odd's life! when I heard how the lawyers and doctors had took to their own hair, I thought how 'twould go next;—odd rabbit it! when the fashion had got foot on the bar, I guessed 'twould mount to the box.

But 'tis all out of character, believe me, Mr. Fag; and look 'ee, I'll never gi' up mine—the lawyers and doctors may do as they will.

Fag. Well, Thomas, we'll not quarrel about that.

Coach. Why, bless you, the gentlemen of the professions ben't all of a mind—for in our village now, thoff Jack Gauge, the exciseman, has ta'en to his carrots, there's little Dick, the farrier, swears he'll never forsake his bob, though all the college should appear with their own heads!

Fag. Indeed! well said, Dick!—but hold—mark! mark! Thomas.

Coach. Zooks, 'tis the captain! Is that the lady with him?

Fag. No, no. that is Madam Lucy, my master's mistress's maid: they lodge at that house. But I must after him, to tell him the news.

Coach. Odd, he's giving her money!—Well, Mr. Fag—

Fag. Good bye, Thomas; I have an appointment in Gyde's porch this evening, at eight: meet me there, and we'll make a little party. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Dressing-Room in* MRS. MALAPROP'S *Lodgings.* LYDIA LANGUISH *sitting on a Sofa, with a Book in her hand;* LUCY *has just returned from a Message.*

Lucy. Indeed, ma'am, I traversed half the town in search of it: I don't believe there's a circulating library in Bath I ha'n't been at.

Lyd. And could you not get "The Reward of Constancy?"

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am.

Lyd. Nor "The Fatal Connexion?"

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am.

Lyd. Nor "The Mistakes of the Heart?"

Lucy. Ma'am, as ill-luck would have it, Mr. Bull said Miss Sukey Saunter had just fetched it away.

Lyd. Heigho! Did you inquire for "The Delicate Distress?"

Lucy. Or, "The Memoirs of Lady Woodford?" Yes, indeed, ma'am, I asked everywhere for it; and I might have brought it from Mr. Frederick's, but Lady Slattern Lounger, who had just sent it home, had so soiled and dog's-eared it, it wa'n't fit for a Christian to read.

Lyd. Heigho! Yes, I always know when Lady Slattern has been before me: she has a most observing thumb, and, I believe, cherishes her nails for the convenience of making marginal notes. Well, child, what have you brought me?

Lucy. Oh, here, ma'am!—[*Takes books from under her cloak and from her pockets.*] This is "The Gordian Knot," and this, "Peregrine Pickle"—here are "The Tears of Sensibility," and "Humphrey Clinker." This is "The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality, Written by Herself," and here is the second volume of "The Sentimental Journey."

Lyd. Heigh-ho!—What are those books by the glass?

Lucy. The great one is only "The Whole Duty of Man," where I press a few blonds, ma'am.

Lyd. Very well—give me the sal volatile.

Lucy. Is it in a blue cover, ma'am?

Lyd. My smelling-bottle, you simpleton!

Lucy. Oh, the drops—here, ma'am.

Lyd. Hold! here's some one coming—quick, see who it is. [*Exit Lucy.*] Surely I heard my cousin Julia's voice!

Re-enter LUCY.

Lucy. Lud, ma'am, here is Miss Melville!

Lyd. Is it possible! [*Exit Lucy.*

Enter JULIA.

Lyd. My dearest Julia, how delighted I am! [*They embrace.*] How unexpected was this happiness!

Jul. True, Lydia, and our pleasure is the greater. But what has been the matter? You were denied to me at first.

Lyd. Ah, Julia, I have a thousand things to tell you! But first inform me what has conjured you to Bath? Is Sir Anthony here?

Jul. He is: we arrived within this hour, and I suppose he will be here to wait on Mrs. Malaprop as soon as he is dressed.

Lyd. Then before we are interrupted, let me impart to you some of my distress: I know your gentle nature will sympathize with me, though your prudence may condemn me. My letters have informed you of my whole connexion with Beverley; but I have lost him, Julia! My aunt has discovered our intercourse, by a note she intercepted, and has confined me ever since. Yet would you believe it? She has absolutely fallen in love with a tall Irish baronet she met one night, since we have been here, at Lady MacShuffle's rout.

Jul. You jest, Lydia!

Lyd. No, upon my word. She really carries on a kind of correspondence with him, under a feigned name though, till she chooses to be known to him; but it is a Delia, or a Celia, I assure you.

Jul. Then surely she is now more indulgent to her niece!

Lyd. Quite the contrary: since she has discovered her own frailty, she has become more suspicious of mine.—Then I must inform you of another plague: that odious Acres is to be in Bath to-day; so that, I protest, I shall be teased out of all spirits.

Jul. Come, come, Lydia, hope for the best;—Sir Anthony shall use his interest with Mrs. Malaprop.

Lyd. But you have not heard the worst:—Unfortunately I had quarreled with my poor Beverley, just before my aunt made the discovery, and I have not seen him since to make it up.

Jul. What was his offence?

Lyd. Nothing at all!—But I don't know how it was, as often as we had been together, we had never had a quarrel; and, somehow, I was afraid he would never give me an opportunity; so, last Thursday I wrote a letter to myself, to inform myself that Beverley was, at that time, paying his addresses to another woman. I signed it "Your unknown friend," showed it to Beverley, charged him with his falsehood, put myself in a violent passion, and vowed I'd never see him more.

Jul. And you let him depart so, and have not seen him since?

Lyd. 'Twas the next day my aunt found the matter out; I intended only to have teased him three days and a half, and now I've lost him forever.

Jul. If he is as deserving and sincere as you have represented him to me, he will never give you up so. Yet consider, Lydia, you tell me he is but an ensign—and you have thirty thousand pounds!

Lyd. But, you know, I lose most of my fortune if I marry without my aunt's consent, till of age; and that is what I have determined to do ever since I knew the penalty; nor could I love the man who would wish to wait a day for the alternative.

Jul. Nay, this is caprice!

Lyd. What, does Julia tax me with caprice? I thought her lover Faulkland had inured her to it.

Jul. I do not love even his faults.

Lyd. But you have sent to him, I suppose?

Jul. Not yet, upon my word! nor has he the least idea

of my being in Bath; Sir Anthony's resolution was so sudden, I could not inform him of it.

Lyd. Well, Julia, you are your own mistress, though under the protection of Sir Anthony; yet have you, for this long year, been a slave to the caprice, the whim, the jealousy of this ungrateful Faulkland, who will ever delay assuming the right of a husband, while you suffer him to be equally imperious as a lover.

Jul. Nay, you are wrong entirely. We were contracted before my father's death. That, and some consequent embarrassments, have delayed what I know to be my Faulkland's most ardent wish. He is too generous to trifle on such a point; and, for his character, you wrong him there, too. No, Lydia, he is too proud, too noble, to be jealous; if he is captious, 'tis without dissembling; if fretful, without rudeness. Unused to the fopperies of love, he is negligent of the little duties expected from a lover; but, being unhackneyed in the passion, his affection is ardent and sincere; and as it engrosses his whole soul, he expects every thought and emotion of his mistress to move in unison with his. Yet, though his pride calls for this full return, his humility makes him undervalue those qualities in him, which would entitle him to it; and not feeling why he should be loved to the degree he wishes, he still suspects that he is not loved enough. This, I must own, has cost me many unhappy hours; but I have learned to think myself his debtor for those imperfections which arise from the ardour of his attachment.

Lyd. Well, I cannot blame you for defending him. But, tell me candidly, Julia—had he never saved your life do you think you should have been attached to him as you are? Believe me, the rude blast that overset your boat was a prosperous gale of love to him.

Jul. Gratitude may have strengthened my attachment to Mr. Faulkland, but I loved him before he had pre-

served me; yet, surely, that alone were an obligation sufficient.

Lyd. Obligation! why, a water spaniel would have done as much! Well, I should never think of giving my heart to a man because he could swim!

Jul. Come, Lydia, you are too inconsiderate.

Lyd. Nay, I do but jest—What's here?

Enter LUCY, *in a hurry.*

Lucy. Oh, ma'am, here is Sir Anthony Absolute, just come home with your aunt.

Lyd. They'll not come here:—Lucy, do you watch.

[*Exit Lucy.*

Jul. Yes! I must go; Sir Anthony does not know I am here, and if we meet, he'll detain me, to show me the town. I'll take another opportunity of paying my respects to Mrs. Malaprop, when she shall treat me, as long as she chooses, with her select words, so ingeniously misapplied, without being mispronounced.

Enter LUCY.

Lucy. Oh, lud, ma'am! They are both coming up stairs!

Lyd. Well, I'll not detain you.—Adieu, my dear Julia! I'm sure you are in haste to send to Faulkland.—There—through my room you'll find another staircase.

Jul. Adieu! [*Exit.*

Lyd. Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books.—Quick, quick.—Fling "Peregrine Pickle" under the toilet—throw "Roderick Random" into the closet—put "The Innocent Adultery" into "The Whole Duty of Man"—thrust "Lord Aimworth" under the sofa—cram "Ovid" behind the bolster—there—put "The Man of Feeling" into your pocket—so, so—now lay "Mrs. Chapone" in

sight, and leave "Fordyce's Sermons" open on the table.

Lucy. O burn it, madam! the hair-dresser has torn away as far as *Propcr Pride.*

Lyd. Never mind—open at *Sobriety.*—Fling me "Lord Chesterfield's Letters"—Now for 'em. [*Exit Lucy.*

Enter MRS. MALAPROP *and* SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.

Mrs. M. There, Sir Anthony, there sits the deliberate simpleton, who wants to disgrace her family, and lavish herself on a fellow not worth a shilling.

Lyd. Madam, I thought you once——

Mrs. M. You thought, miss! I don't know any business you have to think at all: thought does not become a young woman. But the point we would request of you is, that you will promise to forget this fellow—to illiterate him, I say, quite, from your memory.

Lyd. Ah! madam! our memories are independent of our wills. It is not so easy to forget.

Mrs. M. But I say it is, miss! there is nothing on earth so easy as to forget, if a person chooses to set about it. I'm sure I have as much forgot your poor dear uncle, as if he had never existed; and I thought it my duty so to do; and let me tell you, Lydia, these violent memories don't become a young woman.

Lyd. What crime, madam, have I committed, to be treated thus?

Mrs. M. Now don't attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter; you know I have proof controvertible of it. But tell me, will you promise me to do as you are bid? Will you take a husband of your friends' choosing?

Lyd. Madam, I must tell you plainly, that, had I no preferment for any one else, the choice you have made would be my aversion.

Mrs. M. What business have you, miss, with prefer-

Portrait of Mrs. Drew as "Mrs. Malaprop"

Portrait of Mrs. Drew as "Mrs. Malaprop"

ence and aversion? They don't become a young woman; and you ought to know, that as both always wear off, 'tis safest, in matrimony, to begin with a little aversion. I am sure I hated your poor dear uncle before marriage, as if he'd been a blackamoor; and yet, miss, you are sensible what a wife I made!—and, when, it pleased Heaven to release me from him, 'tis unknown what tears I shed! But, suppose we were going to give you another choice, will you promise us to give up this Beverley?

Lyd. Could I belie my thoughts so far as to give that promise, my actions would certainly as far belie my words.

Mrs. M. Take yourself to your room! You are fit company for nothing but your own ill-humors.

Lyd. Willingly, ma'am; I cannot change for the worse. [*Exit.*

Mrs. M. There's a little intricate hussy for you!

Sir A. It is not to be wondered at, ma'am,—all this is the natural consequence of teaching girls to read. Had I a thousand daughters, by Heaven, I'd as soon have them taught the black art as their alphabet! In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library; she had a book in each hand—they were half-bound volumes, with marble covers; from that moment, I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress!

Mrs. M. Those are vile places, indeed!

Sir A. Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year! And, depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last.

Mrs. M. Fie, fie, Sir Anthony, you surely speak laconically.

Sir A. Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation, now, what would you have a woman know?

Mrs. M. Observe me, Sir Anthony—I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman;—for instance—I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or Algebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning; nor will it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments; but, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts; and, as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries; but, above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not misspell and mispronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know; and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

Sir A. Well, well, Mrs. Malaprop, I will dispute the point no further with you: though I must confess, that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question. But to the more important point in debate—you say you have no objection to my proposal?

Mrs. M. None, I assure you.—I am under no positive engagement with Mr. Acres; and as Lydia is so obstinate against him, perhaps your son may have better success.

Sir A. Well, madam, I will write for the boy directly. —He knows not a syllable of this yet, though I have for some time had the proposal in my head. He is at present with his regiment.

Mrs. M. We have never seen your son, Sir Anthony; but I hope no objection on his side.

Sir A. Objection!—let him object, if he dare!—no, no, Mrs. Malaprop; Jack knows that the least demur puts me in a frenzy directly. My process was always very simple—in his younger days, 'twas "Jack, do this," —if he demurred, I knocked him down; and, if he grumbled at that, I always sent him out of the room.

Mrs. M. Ay, and the properest way, o'my conscience! —Nothing is so conciliating to young people, as severity. Well, Sir Anthony, I shall give Mr. Acres his discharge, and prepare Lydia to receive your son's invocations; and I hope you will represent her to the Captain as an object not altogether illegible.

Sir A. Madam, I will handle the subject prudently. I must leave you; and let me beg you, Mrs. Malaprop, to enforce this matter roundly to the girl—take my advice, keep a tight hand—if she rejects this proposal, clap her under lock and key; and if you were just to let the servants forget to bring her dinner for three or four days you can't conceive how she'd come about. [*Exit.*

Mrs. M. Well, at any rate, I shall be glad to get her from under my intuition—she has somehow discovered my partiality for Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Sure, Lucy can't have betrayed me!—No, the girl is such a simpleton, I should have made her confess it.—Lucy, Lucy! [*Calls.*] Had she been one of your artificial ones, I should never have trusted her.

Enter Lucy.

Lucy. Did you call, ma'am?

Mrs. M. Yes, girl.—Did you see Sir Lucius while you was out?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am, not a glimpse of him.

Mrs. M. You are sure, Lucy, that you never mentioned——

Lucy. Oh, gemini! I'd sooner cut my tongue out!

Mrs. M. Well, don't let your simplicity be imposed on.

Lucy. No, ma'am.

Mrs. M. So, come to me presently, and I'll give you another letter to Sir Lucius; but mind, Lucy, if ever you betray what you are intrusted with (unless it be other people's secrets to me), you forfeit my malevolence forever; and your being a simpleton shall be no excuse for your locality. [*Exit.*

Lucy. Ha! ha! ha! So, my dear simplicity, let me give you a little respite;—[*Altering her manner.*] Let girls in my station be as fond as they please of appearing expert, and knowing in their trust, commend me to a mask of silliness, and a pair of sharp eyes for my own interest under it!—Let me see to what account have I turned my simplicity lately: [*Looks at a paper.*] "For abetting Miss Lydia Languish in a design of running away with an ensign! in money sundry times, twelve pound twelve—gowns, five; hats, ruffles, caps, etc., numberless.—From the said ensign, within this last month, six guineas and a half.—Item, from Mrs. Malaprop, for betraying the young people to her—what I found matters were likely to be discovered—two guineas and a French shawl.—Item, from Mr. Acres, for carrying divers letters—which I never delivered—two guineas and a pair of buckles.—Item, from Sir Lucius O'Trigger, three crowns, two gold pocket-pieces, and a silver snuff-box!" Well done, simplicity! yet I was forced to make my Hibernian believe that he was corresponding, not with the aunt, but with the niece; for, though not over rich, I found he had too much pride and delicacy to sacrifice the feelings of a gentleman to the necessities of his fortune. [*Exit.*

ACT II

Scene I.—*Captain Absolute's Lodgings*

Enter Captain Absolute *and* Fag

Fag. Sir, while I was there, Sir Anthony came in; I told him you had sent me to inquire after his health; and to know if he was at leisure to see you.

Capt. A. And what did he say, on hearing I was at Bath?

Fag. Sir, in my life, I never saw an elderly gentleman more astonished. He started back two or three paces, rapped out a dozen interjectural oaths, and asked what the devil had brought you here.

Capt. A. Well, sir, and what did you say?

Fag. Oh, I lied, sir—I forgot the precise lie, but, you may depend on't, he got no truth from me.—Yet, with submission, for fear of blunders in future, I should be glad to fix what has brought us to Bath, in order that we may lie a little consistently. Sir Anthony's servants were curious, sir, very curious, indeed.

Capt A. You have said nothing to them?

Fag. Oh, not a word, sir—not a word. Mr. Thomas indeed, the coachman (whom I take to be the discreetest of whips)——

Capt. A. 'Sdeath!—you rascal! you have not trusted him?

Fag. Oh, no, sir,—no—no—not a syllable, upon my veracity! He was, indeed, a little inquisitive; but I was sly, sir—devlish sly!—My master (said I), honest Thomas (you know, sir, one says honest to one's inferiors), is come to Bath to recruit—yes, sir—I said to recruit—and whether for men, money, or constitution, you know, sir, is nothing to him, nor any one else.

Capt. A. Well—recruit will do—let it be so.

Fag. Oh, sir, recruit will do surprisingly;—indeed, to give the thing an air, I told Thomas that your honour had already enlisted five disbanded chairmen, seven minority waiters, and thirteen billiard markers.

Capt. A. You blockhead, never say more than is necessary.

Fag. I beg pardon, sir—I beg pardon, but with submission, a lie is nothing unless one supports it. Sir, whenever I draw on my invention for a good current lie, I always forge endorsements as well as the bill.

Capt. A. Well, take care you don't hurt your credit by offering too much security. Is Mr. Faulkland returned?

Fag. He is above, sir, changing his dress.

Capt. A. Can you tell whether he has been informed of Sir Anthony's and Miss Melville's arrival?

Fag. I fancy not, sir; he has seen no one since he came in but his gentleman, who was with him at Bristol. I think, sir, I hear Mr. Faulkland coming down——

Capt. A. Go, tell him I am here.

Fag. Yes, sir,—[*Going.*] I beg pardon, sir, but should Sir Anthony call, you will do me the favor to remember that we are recruiting, if you please.

Capt. A. Well, well.

Fag. And in tenderness to my character, if your honour could bring in the chairmen and waiters, I should esteem it as an obligation:—for though I never scruple a lie to serve my master, yet it hurts one's conscience to be found out. [*Exit.*

Capt. A. Now for my whimsical friend:—If he does not know that his mistress is here, I'll tease him a little before I tell him——

Enter FAULKLAND.

Faulkland, you're welcome to Bath again; you are punctual in your return.

Faul. Yes; I had nothing to detain me when I had finished the business I went on. Well, what news since I left you? How stand matters between you and Lydia?

Capt. A. 'Faith, much as they were; I have not seen her since our quarrel; however, I expect to be recalled every hour.

Faul. Why don't you persuade her to go off with you at once?

Capt. A. What, and lose two-thirds of her fortune? You forget that, my friend.—No, no, I could have brought her to that long ago.

Faul. Nay, then, you trifle too long—if you are sure of her, propose to the aunt, in your own character, and write to Sir Anthony for his consent.

Capt. A. Softly, softly; for though I am convinced my little Lydia would elope with me as Ensign Beverley, yet am I by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our friends' consent, a regular humdrum wedding, and the reversion of a good fortune on my side. No, no, I must prepare her gradually for the discovery, and make myself necessary to her before I risk it. Well, but Faulkland, you'll dine with us to-day at the hotel?

Faul. Indeed, I cannot; I am not in spirits to be of such a party.

Capt. A. By heavens! I shall forswear your company. You are the most teasing, captious, incorrigible lover!—Do love like a man.

Faul. I own I am unfit for company.

Capt. A. Am I not a lover; ay, and a romantic one, too? Yet do I carry everywhere with me such a confounded farrego of doubts, fears, hopes, wishes, and all the flimsy furniture of a country miss's brain?

Faul. Ah! Jack, your heart and soul are not like mine, fixed immutably on one only object. You throw

for a large stake, but, losing, you could stake and throw again; but I have set my sum of happiness on this cast, and not to succeed were to be stripped of all.

Capt. A. But, for heaven's sake! what grounds for apprehension can your whimsical brain conjure up at present?

Faul. What grounds for apprehension, did you say? Heavens! are there not a thousand? I fear for her spirits—her health—her life!—My absence may fret her; her anxiety for my return, her fears for me, may oppress her gentle temper; and for her health, does not every hour bring me cause to be alarmed? If it rains, some shower may even then have chilled her delicate frame! If the wind be keen, some rude blast may have affected her! The heat of noon, the dews of the evening, may endanger the life of her for whom only I value mine. Oh! Jack, when delicate and feeling souls are separated, there is not a feature in the sky, not a movement of the elements, not an aspiration of the breeze, but hints some cause for a lover's apprehension!

Capt. A. Ay, but we may choose whether we will take the hint or not.—So, then, Faulkland, if you were convinced that Julia were well, and in spirits, you would be entirely content?

Faul. I should be happy beyond measure—I am anxious only for that.

Capt. A. Then cure your anxiety at once—Miss Melville is in perfect health, and is at this moment in Bath.

Faul. Nay, Jack—don't trifle with me.

Capt. A. She is arrived here with my father, within this hour.

Faul. Can you be serious?

Capt. A. I thought you knew Sir Anthony better than to be surprised at a sudden whim of this kind.—Seriously, then, it is as I tell you, upon my honor.

Faul. My dear Jack—now nothing on earth can give me a moment's uneasiness.

Enter Fag.

Fag. Sir, Mr. Acres, just arrived, is below.

Capt. A. Stay, Faulkner, this Acres lives within a mile of Sir Anthony, and he shall tell you how your mistress has been ever since you left her. Fag, show the gentleman up. [*Exit Fag.*

Faul. What, is he much acquainted in the family?

Capt. A. Oh, very intimate. I insist on your not going; besides, his character will divert you.

Faul. Well, I should like to ask him a few question.

Capt. A. He is likewise a rival of mine—that is, of my other self, for he does not think his friend, Captain Absolute, ever saw the lady in question; and it is ridiculous enough to hear him complain to me of one Beverley, a conceited, skulking rival, who——

Faul. Hush!—he's here!

Enter Acres.

Acres. Ha! my dear friend, noble captain, and honest Jack, how dost thou? just arrived, 'faith, as you see. Sir, your humble servant. Warm work on the roads, Jack—odds whips and wheels! I've traveled like a comet, with a tail of dust all the way, as long as the Mall.

Capt. A. Ah! Bob, you are indeed an eccentric planet, but we know your attraction hither. Give me leave to introduce Mr. Faulkland to you; Mr. Faulkland, Mr. Acres.

Acres. Sir, I am most heartily glad to see you; sir, I solicit your connections.—Hey, Jack—what, this is Mr. Faulkland, who——

Capt. A. Ay! Bob, Miss Melville's Mr. Faulkland.

Acres. Odso! she and your father can be but just arrived before me?—I suppose you have seen them. Ah! Mr. Faulkland, you are, indeed, a happy man!

Faul. I have not seen Miss Melville yet, sir; I hope she enjoyed full health and spirits in Devonshire?

Acres. Never knew her better in my life, sir; never better. Odds blushes and blooms! She has been as healthy as the German Spa.

Faul. Indeed! I did hear that she had been a little indisposed.

Acres. False, false, sir; only said to vex you; quite the reverse, I assure you.

Faul. There, Jack, you see she has the advantage of me; I had almost fretted myself ill.

Capt. A. Now are you angry with your mistress for not having been sick.

Faul. No, no, you misunderstand me; yet sure a little trifling indisposition is not an unnatural consequence of absence from those we love. Now confess—isn't there something unkind in this violent, robust, unfeeling health?

Capt. A. Oh, it was very unkind of her to be well in your absence, to be sure!

Acres. Good apartments, Jack.

Faul. Well, sir, but you were saying that Miss Melville has been so exceedingly well—what, then, she has been merry and gay, I suppose?—always in spirits, hey?

Acres. Merry! odds crickets! she has been the belle and spirit of the company wherever she has been—so lively and entertaining; so full of wit and humor!

Faul. There, Jack, there.—Oh, by my soul! there is an innate levity in woman that nothing can overcome!—What! happy, and I away?

Capt. A. Have done! How foolish this is! Just now you were only apprehensive for your mistress's spirits.

Faul. Why, Jack, have I been the joy and spirit of the company?

Capt. A. No, indeed, you have not.

Faul. Have I been lively and entertaining?

Capt. A. Oh, upon my word, I acquit you.

Faul. Have I been full of wit and humor?

Capt. A. No, 'faith, to do you justice, you have been confoundedly stupid, indeed.

Acres. What's the matter with the gentleman?

Capt. A. He is only expressing his great satisfaction at hearing that Julia has been so well and happy—that's all—hey, Faulkland?

Faul. Oh! I am rejoiced to hear it! Yes, yes, she has a happy disposition?

Acres. That she has, indeed—then she is so accomplished—so sweet a voice—so expert at her harpsichord—such a mistress of flat and sharp, squallante, rumblante, and quiverante!—there was this time month—odds minims and crochets! how she did chirrup at Mrs. Piano's concert.

Faul. There again, what say you to this? You see she has been all mirth and song—not a thought of me!

Capt. A. Pho! man, is not music the food of love?

Faul. Well, well, it may be so.—Pray, Mr.——what's his damned name?—Do you remember what songs Miss Melville sung?

Acres. Not I, indeed.

Capt. A. Stay, now, there were some pretty, melancholy, purling-stream airs, I warrant; perhaps you may recollect;—did she sing "When absent from my soul's delight?"

Acres. No, that wa'n't it.

Capt. A. Or, "Go, gentle gales"? [*Sings.*

Acres. Oh, no! nothing like it. Odds! now I recollect one of them—"My heart's my own, my will is free." [*Sings.*

Faul. Fool! fool that I am! to fix all my happiness on such a trifler! 'Sdeath! to make herself the pipe and ballad-monger of a circle! to soothe her light heart with catches and glees! What can you say to this, sir?

Capt. A. Why, that I should be glad to hear my mistress had been so merry, sir.

Faul. Nay, nay, nay—I'm not sorry that she has been happy—no, no, I am glad of that—I would not have had her sad or sick—yet surely a sympathetic heart would have shown itself even in the choice of a song—she might have been temperately healthy, and somehow, plaintively gay; but she has been dancing, too, I doubt not.

Acres. What does the gentleman say about dancing?

Capt. A. He says the lady we speak of dances as well as she sings.

Acres. Ay, truly does she—there was at our last race ball——

Faul. Hell and the devil. There! there—I told you so! I told you so! Oh! she thrives in my absence!—Dancing! But her whole feelings have been in opposition with mine;—I have been anxious, silent, pensive, sedentary—my days have been hours of care, my nights of watchfulness.—She has been all health! spirit! laugh! song! dance!—Oh! damned, damned, levity!

Capt. A. For heaven's sake, Faulkland, don't expose yourself so!—Suppose she has danced, what then?—does not the ceremony of society often oblige——

Faul. Well, well, I'll contain myself—perhaps, as you say—for form's sake.—What, Mr. Acres, you were praising Miss Melville's manner of dancing a minuet—hey?

Acres. Oh, I dare insure her for that—but what I was going to speak of, was her country dancing. Odds swimmings! she has such an air with her!

Faul. Now, disappointment on her!—defend this, Absolute! why don't you defend this?—Country-dances!

jigs and reels! am I to blame now? A minuet I could have forgiven—I should not have minded that—I say I should not have regarded a minuet, but country-dances! Zounds, had she made one in a cotillon—I believe I could have forgiven even that—but to be monkey-led for a night!—to run the gauntlet through a string of amorous palming puppies!—to show paces like a managed filly!—Oh, Jack, there never can be but one man in the world whom a truly modest and delicate woman ought to pair with in a country-dance; and, even then, the rest of the couples should be her great-uncles and aunts!

Capt. A. Ay, to be sure; grandfathers and grandmothers!

Faul. If there be but one vicious mind in the set, it will spread like a contagion—the action of their pulse beats to the lascivious movement of the jig—their quivering, warm-breathed sighs impregnate the very air—the atmosphere becomes electrical to love, and each amorous spark darts through every link of the chain!—I must leave you—I own I am somewhat flurried, and that confounded booby has perceived it. [*Going.*

Capt. A. Nay, but stay, Faulkland, and thank Mr. Acres for his good news.

Faul. Damn his news! [*Exit.*

Capt. A. Ha! ha! ha! poor Faulkland! Five minutes since—"nothing on earth could give him a moment's uneasiness!"

Acres. The gentleman wasn't angry at my praising his mistress, was he?

Capt. A. A little jealous, I believe, Bob!

Acres. You don't say so? Ha! ha! jealous of me!—that's a good joke!

Capt. A. There's nothing strange in that, Bob! let me tell you, that sprightly grace and insinuating manner of yours, will do some mischief among the girls here.

Acres. Ah! you joke—ha! ha! mischief—ha! ha! but you know I am not my own property! my dear Lydia has forestalled me. She could never abide me in the country, because I used to dress so badly—but, odds frogs and tambours! I sha'n't take matters so here—now ancient madam has no voice in it; I'll make my old clothes know who's master. I shall straightway cashier the hunting-frock, and render my leather breeches incapable. My hair has been in training some time. [*Showing his hair in curl papers.*

Capt. A. Indeed!

Acres. Ay—and tho'ff the side curls are a little restive, my hind part takes it very kindly.

Capt. A. Oh, you'll polish, I doubt not.

Acres. Absolutely I propose so—then, if I can find out this Ensign Beverley, odds triggers and flints! I'll make him know the difference o't.

Capt. A. Spoke like a man! But, pray, Bob, I observe you have got an odd kind of a new method of swearing——

Acres. Ha! ha! you've taken notice of it—'tis genteel, isn't it?—I didn't invent it myself, though; but a commander in our militia, a great scholar, I assure you, says that there is no meaning in the common oaths, and that nothing but their antiquity makes them respectable; because, he says, the ancients would never stick to an oath or two, but would say by Jove! or by Bacchus! or by Mars! or by Venus! or by Pallas! according to the sentiment;—so that to swear with propriety, says my little Major, the oath should be an echo to the sense; and this we call the oath referential, or sentimental swearing—ha! ha! ha! 'tis genteel, isn't it?

Capt. A. Very genteel, and very new indeed—and I dare say will supplant all other figures of imprecation.

Acres. Ay, ay, the best terms will grow obsolete—Damns have had their day.

Enter FAG.

Fag. Sir, there is a gentleman below desires to see you.—Shall I show him into the parlor?

Capt. A. Ay—you may.

Acres. Well, I must be gone——

Capt. A. Stay; who is it, Fag?

Fag. Your father, sir.

Capt. A. You puppy, why didn't you show him up directly? [*Exit Fag.*

Acres. You have business with Sir Anthony.—I expect a message from Mrs. Malaprop, at my lodgings. I have sent also to my dear friend, Sir Lucius O"Trigger. —Adieu, Jack! we must meet at night, when you shall give me a dozen bumpers to little Lydia. [*Exit.*

Capt. A. That I will, with all my heart. Now for a parental lecture—I hope he has heard nothing of the business that has brought me here—I wish the gout had held him fast in Devonshire, with all my soul!

Enter SIR ANTHONY.

Sir, I am delighted to see you here looking so well! —your sudden arrival at Bath made me apprehensive for your health.

Sir A. Very apprehensive, I dare say, Jack.—What, you are recruiting here, hey?

Capt. A. Yes, sir, I am on duty.

Sir A. Well, Jack, I am glad to see you, though I did not expect it; for I was going to write to you on a little matter of business.—Jack, I have been considering that I grow old and infirm, and shall probably not trouble you long.

Capt. A. Pardon me, sir, I never saw you look more strong and hearty, and I pray fervently that you may continue so.

Sir A. I hope your prayers may be heard, with all my heart. Well, then, Jack, I have been considering that I am so strong and hearty, I may continue to plague you a long time.—Now, Jack, I am sensible that the income of your commission, and what I have hitherto allowed you, is but a small pittance for a lad of your spirit.

Capt. A. Sir, you are very good.

Sir A. And it is my wish, while yet I live, to have my boy make some figure in the world. I have resolved, therefore, to fix you at once in a noble independence.

Capt. A. Sir, your kindness overpowers me. Such generosity makes the gratitude of reason more lively than the sensation even of filial affection.

Sir A. I am glad you are so sensible of my attention—and you shall be master of a large estate in a few weeks.

Capt. A. Let my future life, sir, speak my gratitude; I cannot express the sense I have of your munificence.—Yet, sir, I presume you would not wish me to quit the army?

Sir A. Oh! that shall be as your wife chooses.

Capt. A. My wife, sir!

Sir A. Ay, ay, settle that between you—settle that between you.

Capt. A. A wife, sir, did you say?

Sir A. Ay, a wife—why, did not I mention her before?

Capt. A. Not a word of her, sir.

Sir A. Odd so! I mustn't forget her, though—Yes, Jack, the independence I was talking of, is by a marriage—the fortune is saddled with a wife—but I suppose that makes no difference.

Capt. A. Sir! sir! you amaze me!

Sir A. Why, what the devil's the matter with the fool? Just now you were all gratitude and duty.

Capt. A. I was, sir,—you talked to me of independence and a fortune, but not a word of a wife.

Sir A. Why—what difference does that make? Odds life, sir! if you have the estate, you must take it with the live stock on it, as it stands.

Capt. A. If my happiness is to be the price, I must beg leave to decline the purchase. Pray, sir, who is the lady?

Sir A. What's that to you, sir?—Come, give me your promise to love, and to marry her directly.

Capt. A. Sure, sir, this is not very reasonable, to summon my affections for a lady I know nothing of!

Sir A. I am sure, sir, 'tis more unreasonable in you to object to a lady you know nothing of.

Capt. A. Then, sir, I must tell you plainly that my inclinations are fixed on another—my heart is engaged to an angel.

Sir A. Then pray let it send an excuse. It is very sorry—but business prevents its waiting on her.

Capt. A. But my vows are pledged to her.

Sir A. Let her foreclose, Jack; let her foreclose: they are not worth redeeming; besides, you have the angel's vows in exchange, I suppose; so there can be no loss there.

Capt. A. You must excuse me, sir, if I tell you, once for all, that in this point I cannot obey you.

Sir A. Hark'ee Jack!—I have heard you for some time with patience—I have been cool—quite cool; but take care—you know I am compliance itself—when I am not thwarted; no one more easily led—when I have my own way;—but don't put me in a frenzy.

Capt. A. Sir, I must repeat—in this I cannot obey you.

Sir A. Now, damn me, if ever I call you Jack again while I live!

Capt. A. Nay, sir, but hear me.

Sir A. Sir, I won't hear a word—not a word! not one word! so give me your promise by a nod—and I'll tell you what, Jack—I mean, you dog—if you don't, by——

Capt. A. What, sir, promise to link myself to some mass of ugliness! to——

Sir A. Zounds! Sirrah! the lady shall be as ugly as I choose: she shall have a hump on each shoulder; she shall be as crooked as the Crescent; her one eye shall roll like the bull's in Cox's Museum—she shall have a skin like a mummy, and the beard of a Jew—she shall be all this, sirrah!—yet I'll make you ogle her all day, and sit up all night to write sonnets of her beauty.

Capt. A. This is reason and moderation, indeed!

Sir A. None of your sneering, puppy! no grinning, jackanapes!

Capt. A. Indeed, sir, I never was in a worse humor for mirth in my life.

Sir A. 'Tis false, sir; I know you are laughing in your sleeve; I know you'll grin when I am gone, sirrah!

Capt. A. Sir, I hope I know my duty better.

Sir A. None of your passion, sir! none of your violence, if you please!—It won't do with me, I promise you.

Capt. A. Indeed, sir, I never was cooler in my life.

Sir A. 'Tis a confounded lie!—I know you are in a passion in your heart; I know you are, you hypocritical young dog!—but it won't do.

Capt. A. Nay, sir, upon my word——

Sir A. So, you will fly out! Can't you be cool, like me?—What the devil good can passion do?—passion is of no service, you impudent, insolent, over-bearing reprobate!—There, you sneer again!—don't provoke me! but you rely upon the mildness of my temper—you do, you dog! you play upon the meekness of my disposition! Yet take care—the patience of a saint may be overcome at last!—but mark!—I give you six hours and a half to consider of this: if you then agree, without any condition, to do everything on earth that I choose, why—confound you; I may in time forgive you.—If not, zounds!

don't enter the same hemisphere with me! don't dare to breathe the same air, or use the same light with me; but get an atmosphere and a sun of your own! I'll strip you of your commission; I'll lodge a five-and-threepence in the hands of trustees, and you shall live on the interest. I'll disown you, I'll disinherit you, I'll unget you; and, damn me! if ever I call you Jack again! [*Exit.*

Capt. A. Mild, gentle, considerate father! I kiss your hands.—What a tender method of giving his opinion in these matters Sir Anthony has! I dare not trust him with the truth.—I wonder what old wealthy hag it is that he wants to bestow on me!—Yet he married, himself, for love! and was in his youth a bold intriguer, and a gay companion!

Enter FAG.

Fag. Assuredly, sir, our father is wroth to a degree; he comes down stairs eight or ten steps at a time, muttering, growling, and thumping the banisters all the way; I and the cook's dog stand bowing at the door—rap! he gives me a stroke on the head with his cane; bids me carry that to my master; then, kicking the poor turnspit into the area, damns us all for a puppy triumvirate!—Upon my credit, sir, were I in your place, and found my father such very bad company, I should certainly drop his acquaintance.

Capt. A. Cease your impertinence, sir, at present—did you come in for nothing more?—Stand out of the way.

[*Pushes him aside and exit.*

Fag. So! Sir Anthony trims my master;—he is afraid to reply to his father, then vents his spleen on poor Fag! When one is vexed by one person, to revenge one's self on another, who happens to come in the way, is the vilest injustice! Ah! it shows the worst of temper, the basest——

Enter ERRAND BOY.

Boy. Mr. Fag! Mr. Fag, your master calls you.

Fag. Well, you little dirty puppy, you needn't bawl so!—the meanest disposition! the——

Boy. Quick, quick! Mr. Fag.

Fag. Quick! quick! you impudent jackanapes! am I to be commanded by you, too? you little, impertinent, insolent, kitchen-bred—— [*Kicks him off.*

SCENE II.—*The North Parade.*

Enter LUCY.

Lucy. So, I shall have another rival to add to my mistress's list—Captain Absolute; however, I shall not enter his name till my purse has received due notice in form. Poor Acres is dismissed!—Well, I have done him a last friendly office, in letting him know that Beverley was here before him. Sir Lucius is generally more punctual, when he expects to hear from his *dear Dalia,* as he calls her:—I wonder he's not here! I have a little scruple of conscience from this deceit; though I should not be paid so well, if my hero knew that Delia was near fifty, and her own mistress.

Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER.

Sir L. Ha! my little ambassadress—upon my conscience I have been looking for you; I have been on the South Parade this half hour.

Lucy. [*Speaking simply.*] Oh, gemini! and I have been waiting for your worship here on the North.

Sir L. 'Faith! may be that was the reason we did not meet; and it is very comical, too, how you could go out,

and I not see you—for I was only taking a nap at the Parade Coffee House, and I chose the window on purpose that I might not miss you.

Lucy. My stars! Now I'd wager a sixpence I went by while you were asleep.

Sir L. Sure enough, it must have been so—and I never dreamt it was so late, till I waked. Well, but my little girl, have you got nothing for me?

Lucy. Yes, but I have—I've got a letter for you in my pocket.

Sir L. I'faith! I guessed you weren't come empty-handed—well—let me see what the dear creature says.

Lucy. There, Sir Lucius. [*Gives him a letter.*

Sir L. [*Reads.*] *"Sir,—There is often a sudden incentive impulse in love, that has a greater induction than years of domestic combination: such was the commotion I felt at the first superfluous view of Sir Lucius O'Trigger."*—Very pretty, upon my word!—*Female punctuation forbids me to say more; yet let me add, that it will give me joy infallible to find Sir Lucius worthy the last criterion of my affections. Delia."*

Upon my conscience! Lucy, your lady is a great mistress of language! 'Faith! she's quite the queen of the dictionary!—for the devil a word dare refuse coming at her call—though one would think it was quite out of hearing.

Lucy. Ay, sir, a lady of her experience——

Sir L. Experience! what, at seventeen?

Lucy. Oh, true, sir—but then she reads so—my stars! how she will read off hand!

Sir L. 'Faith, she must be very deep read, to write this way—though she is rather an arbitrary writer, too—for here are a great many poor words pressed into the service of this note, that would get their *habeas corpus* from any court in Christendom.

Lucy. Ah! Sir Lucius, if you were to hear how she talks of you!

Sir L. Oh, tell her I'll make her the best husband in the world, and Lady O'Trigger into the bargain!—But we must get the old gentlewoman's consent, and do everything fairly.

Lucy. Nay, Sir Lucius, I thought you wa'n't rich enough to be so nice.

Sir L. Upon my word, young woman, you have hit it. I am so poor, that I can't afford to do a dirty action—If I did not want money, I'd steal your mistress and her fortune with a great deal of pleasure.—However, my pretty girl [*Giving her money,*] here's a little something to buy you a ribbon; and meet me in the evening, and I will give you an answer to this. So, hussy, take a kiss beforehand, to put you in mind. [*Kisses her.*

Lucy. Oh, lud! Sir Lucius—I never see such a gemman! My lady won't like you, if you're so impudent.

Sir L. 'Faith, she will, Lucy—that same—pho! what's the name of it?—modesty!—is a quality in a lover more praised by the women than liked: so, if your mistress asks you whether Sir Lucius ever gave you a kiss, tell her fifty, my dear.

Lucy. What, would you have me tell her a lie?

Sir L. Ah, then, you baggage! I'll make it a truth presently.

Lucy. For shame, now! here is some one coming.

Sir L. O'faith, I'll quiet your conscience!

[*Exit, humming a tune.*

Enter Fag.

Fag. So, so, ma'am.—I humbly beg pardon.

Lucy. Oh, lud!—now, Mr. Fag—you flurry one so!

Fag. Come, come, Lucy, here's no one by—so a little less simplicity, with a grain or two more sincerity, if

you please.—You play false with us, madam—I saw you give the baronet a letter. My master shall know this —and if he don't call him out, I will.

Lucy. Ha! ha! ha! you gentlemen's gentlemen are so hasty!—That letter was from Mrs. Malaprop, simpleton. She is taken with Sir Lucius's address.

Fag. How! what tastes some people have! Why, I suppose I have walked by her window an hundred times. But what says our young lady? Any message to my master?

Lucy. Sad news, Mr. Fag! A worse rival than Acres! Sir Anthony Absolute has proposed his son.

Fag. What, Captain Absolute?

Lucy. Even so.—I overheard it all.

Fag. Ha! ha! ha! very good, 'faith! Good bye, Lucy, I must away with this news.

Lucy. Well, you may laugh, but it is true, I assure you. [*Going.*] But, Mr. Fag, tell your master not to be cast down by this.

Fag. Oh, he'll be so disconsolate.

Lucy. And charge him not to think of quarreling with young Absolute.

Fag. Never fear—never fear!

Lucy. Be sure, bid him keep up his spirits.

Fag. We will—we will. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III

Scene I.—*The North Parade*

Enter Captain Absolute

Capt. A. 'Tis just as Fag told me, indeed!—Whimsical enough, 'faith! My father wants to force me to marry the very girl I am plotting to run away with! He must not know of my connexion with her yet awhile. He has too summary a method of proceeding in these matters; however, I'll read my recantation instantly. My conversion is something sudden, indeed; but I can assure him, it is very sincere. So, so—here he comes. He looks plaguy gruff! [*Steps aside.*

Enter Sir Anthony.

Sir A. No—I'll die sooner than forgive him! Die, did I say? I'll live these fifty years to plague him. At our last meeting, his impudence had almost put me out of temper—an obstinate, passionate, self-willed boy! Who can he take after? This is my return for getting him before all his brothers and sisters! for putting him, at twelve years old, into a marching regiment, and allowing him fifty pounds a year besides his pay, ever since! But I have done with him—he's anybody's son for me—I never will see him more—never—never—never—never.

Capt. A. Now for a penitential face!

[*Comes forward.*

Sir A. Fellow, get out of my way!

Capt. A. Sir, you see a penitent before you.

Sir A. I see an impudent scoundrel before me.

Capt. A. A sincere penitent. I am come, sir, to acknowledge my error, and to submit entirely to your will.

Sir A. What's that?

Capt. A. I have been revolving, and reflecting, and considering on your past goodness, and kindness, and condescension to me.

Sir A. Well, sir?

Capt. A. I have been likewise weighing and balancing what you were pleased to mention concerning duty, and obedience, and authority.

Sir A. Why, now you talk sense, absolute sense; I never heard anything more sensible in my life. Confound you, you shall be Jack again!

Capt. A. I am happy in the appellation.

Sir A. Why then, Jack, my dear Jack, I will now inform you who the lady really is. Nothing but your passion and violence, you silly fellow, prevented me telling you at first. Prepare, Jack, for wonder and rapture—prepare! What think you of Miss Lydia Languish?

Capt. A. Languish! What, the Languishes of Worcestershire?

Sir A. Worcestershire! No! Did you ever meet Mrs. Malaprop, and her niece, Miss Languish, who came into our country just before you were last ordered to your regiment?

Capt. A. Malaprop! Languish! I don't remember ever to have heard the names before. Yet, stay; I think I do recollect something. Languish—Languish! She squints, don't she? A little red-haired girl?

Sir A. Squints! A red-haired girl! Zounds, no!

Capt. A. Then I must have forgot: it can't be the same person.

Sir A. Jack, Jack! what think you of blooming, love-breathing seventeen?

Capt. A. As to that, sir, I am quite indifferent: if I can please you in the matter, 'tis all I desire.

Sir A. Nay, but Jack, such eyes! such eyes! so innocently wild! so bashfully irresolute! Not a glance but speaks and kindles some thought of love! Then, Jack, her cheeks! her cheeks, Jack! so deeply blushing at the insinuations of her tell-tale eyes! Then, Jack, her lips! Oh, Jack, lips, smiling at their own discretion; and, if not smiling, more sweetly pouting—more lovely in sullenness!

Capt. A. That's she, indeed. Well done, old gentleman. [*Aside.*

Sir A. Then, Jack, her neck! Oh, Jack! Jack!

Capt. A. And which is to be mine, sir: the niece or the aunt?

Sir A. Why, you unfeeling, insensible puppy, I despise you! When I was of your age, such a description would have made me fly like a rocket! The aunt, indeed! Odds life! when I run away with your mother, I would not have touched any thing old or ugly to gain an empire.

Capt. A. Not to please your father, sir?

Sir A. To please my father! zounds! not to please—Oh! my father? Oddso! yes, yes! if my father, indeed, had desired—that's quite another matter. Though he wasn't the indulgent father that I am, Jack.

Capt. A. I dare say not, sir.

Sir A. But, Jack, you are not sorry to find your mistress is so beautiful?

Capt. A. Sir, I repeat it, if I please you in this affair, 'tis all I desire. Not that I think a woman the worse for being handsome; but, sir, if you please to recollect, you before hinted something about a hump or two, one eye, and a few more graces of that kind. Now, without being very nice, I own I should rather choose a wife of mine to have the usual number of limbs,

and a limited quantity of back; and though one eye may be very agreeable, yet, as the prejudice has always run in favor of two, I would not wish to affect a singularity in that article.

Sir A. What a phlegmatic sot it is! Why, sirrah, you're an anchorite! a vile, insensible stock! You a soldier!—you're a walking block, fit only to dust the company's regimentals on! Odds life, I've a great mind to marry the girl myself.

Capt. A. I am entirely at your disposal, sir; if you should think of addressing Miss Languish yourself, I suppose you would have me marry the aunt; or if you should change your mind, and take the old lady, 'tis the same to me—I'll marry the niece.

Sir A. Upon my word, Jack, thou art either a very great hypocrite, or—but, come, I know your indifference on such a subject must be all a lie—I'm sure it must. Come, now, damn your demure face; come, confess, Jack, you have been lying, ha'n't you? You have been playing the hypocrite, hey? I'll never forgive you, if you ha'nt been lying and playing the hypocrite.

Capt. A. I am sorry, sir, that the respect and duty which I bear to you, should be so mistaken.

Sir. A. Hang your respect and duty! But come along with me. I'll write a note to Mrs. Malaprop, and you shall visit the lady directly. Her eyes shall be the Promethean torch to you—come along. I'll never forgive you, if you don't come back stark mad with rapture and impatience—if you don't, 'egad, I'll marry the girl myself! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Julia's Dressing-Room.*

Enter FAULKLAND.

Faulk. They told me Julia would return directly: I wonder she is not yet come!—How mean does this cap-

tious, unsatisfied temper of mine appear to my cooler judgment! Yet I know not that I indulge it in any other point: but on this one subject, and to this one subject, whom I think I love beyond my life, I am ever ungenerously fretful and madly capricious. I am conscious of it—yet I cannot correct myself! What tender, honest joy sparkled in her eyes when we met! How delicate was the warmth of her expression!—I was ashamed to appear less happy, though I had come resolved to wear a face of coolness and upbraiding. Sir Anthony's presence prevented my proposed expostulations; yet I must be satisfied that she has not been so very happy in my absence. She is coming! Yes, I know the nimbleness of her tread, when she thinks her impatient Faulkland counts the moments of her stay.

Enter JULIA.

Jul. I had not hoped to see you again so soon.

Faulk. Could I, Julia, be contented with my first welcome, restrained, as we were, by the presence of a third person?

Jul. Oh, Faulkland! when your kindness can make me thus happy, let me not think that I discovered something of coldness in your first salutation.

Faulk. 'Twas but your fancy, Julia. I was rejoiced to see you—to see you in such health. Sure I had no cause for coldness?

Jul. Nay, then, I see you have taken something ill. You must not conceal from me what it is.

Faulk. Well, then, shall I own to you, that my joy at hearing of your health and arrival here, by your neighbor Acres, was somewhat damped by his dwelling much on the high spirits you had enjoyed in Devonshire; on your mirth—your singing—dancing—and I know not what! For such is my temper, Julia, that I should re-

gard every mirthful moment in your absence as a treason to constancy. The mutual tear, that steals down the cheek of parting lovers, is a compact, that no smile shall live there till they meet again.

Jul. Must I never cease to tax my Faulkland with this teasing, minute caprice? Can the idle reports of a silly boor weigh, in your breast, against my tried affection?

Faulk. They have no weight with me, Julia: no, no, I am happy, if you have been so—yet only say that you did not sing with mirth—say that you thought of Faulkland in the dance.

Jul. I never can be happy in your absence. If I wear a countenance of content, it is to show that my mind holds no doubt of my Faulkland's truth. If I seemed sad, it were to make malice triumph; and say, that I fixed my heart on one, who left me to lament his roving, and my own credulity. Believe me, Faulkland, I mean not to upbraid you, when I say that I have often dressed sorrows in smiles, lest my friends should guess whose unkindness had caused my tears.

Faulk. You were ever all goodness to me! Oh, I am a brute, when I but admit a doubt of your true constancy!

Jul. If ever, without such cause from you as I will not suppose possible, you find my affections veering but a point, may I become a proverbial scoff for levity and base ingratitude!

Faulk. Ah, Julia! that last word is grating to me! I would I had no title to your gratitude! Search your heart, Julia: perhaps what you have mistaken for love, is but the warm effusion of a too thankful heart!

Jul. For what quality must I love you?

Faulk. For no quality: to regard me for any quality of mind or understanding, were only to esteem me! And for person—I have often wished myself deformed, to be

convinced that I owed no obligation there for any part of your affection.

Jul. Where nature has bestowed a show of nice attention in the features of a man, he should laugh at it as misplaced. I have seen men, who, in this vain article, perhaps, might rank above you; but my heart has never asked my eyes, if it were so or not.

Faulk. Now, this is not well from you, Julia: I despise person in a man, yet, if you loved me as I wish, though I were an Æthiop, you'd think none so fair.

Jul. I see you are determined to be unkind! The contract which my poor father bound us in, gives you more than a lover's privilege.

Faulk. Again, Julia, you raise ideas that feed and justify my doubts. I would not have been more free—no—I am proud of my restraint. Yet—yet—perhaps your high respect alone for this solemn compact has fettered your inclinations, which else had made a worthier choice. How shall I be sure, had you remained unbound in thought or promise, that I should still have been the object of your persevering love?

Jul. Then try me now. Let us be free as strangers as to what is past: my heart will not feel more liberty.

Faulk. There, now! so hasty, Julia! so anxious to be free! If your love for me were fixed and ardent, you would not loose your hold, even though I wished it!

Jul. Oh, you torture me to the heart! I cannot bear it!

Faulk. I do not mean to distress you: if I loved you less, I should never give you an uneasy moment. But hear me. All my fretful doubts arise from this. Women are not used to weigh and separate the motives of their affections: the cold dictates of prudence, gratitude, or filial duty may sometimes be mistaken for the pleadings of the heart. I would not boast, yet let me say, that I have neither age, person, nor character, to found

dislike on; my fortune such, as few ladies could be charged with indiscretion in the match. Oh, Julia! when love receives such countenance from prudence, nice minds will be suspicious of its birth.

Jul. I know not whither your insinuations would tend, but as they seem pressing to insult me, I will spare you the regret of having done so. I have given you no cause for this! [*Exit, crying.*

Faulk. In tears! stay, Julia—stay, but for a moment. —The door is fastened! Julia! my soul! but for one moment!—I hear her sobbing! 'Sdeath! what a brute am I to use her thus!—Yet stay! Ay, she is coming now; how little resolution there is in woman! how a few soft words can turn them. No, faith!—she is not coming, either.—Why, Julia,—my love—say but that you forgive me—come but to tell me that—now this is being too resentful. Stay! she is coming too—I thought she would—no steadiness in anything; her going away must have been a mere trick then—she sha'n't see that I was hurt by it.—I'll affect indifference. [*Hums a tune; then listens.*] No, zounds, she's not coming, nor don't intend it, I suppose. This is not steadiness, but obstinacy! Yet I deserve it. What, after so long an absence, to quarrel with her tenderness; 'twas barbarous and unmanly!—I should be ashamed to see her now.—I'll wait till her just resentment is abated, and when I distress her so again, may I lose her for ever! and be linked instead to some antique virago, whose gnawing passions, and long-hoarded spleen, shall make me curse my folly half the day and all the night. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Mrs. Malaprop's Lodgings.*

Enter MRS. MALAPROP, *with a Letter in her hand,* CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *following.*

Mrs. M. Your being Sir Anthony's son, Captain,

would itself be a sufficient accommodation; but from the ingenuity of your appearance, I am convinced you deserve the character here given of you.

Capt. A. Permit me to say, madam, that as I have never yet had the pleasure of seeing Miss Languish, my principal inducement in this affair, at present, is the honor of being allied to Mrs. Malaprop, of whose intellectual accomplishments, elegant manners, and unaffected bearing, no tongue is silent.

Mrs. M. Sir, you do me infinite honor! I beg, Captain, you'll be seated—[*Both sit.*]—Ah! few gentlemen, nowadays, know how to value the ineffectual qualities in a woman! few think how a little knowledge becomes a gentlewoman! Men have no sense now but for the worthless flower of beauty.

Capt. A. It is but too true, indeed, ma'am; yet I fear our ladies should share the blame; they think our admiration of beauty so great, that knowledge in them would be superfluous. Thus, like garden trees, they seldom show fruit, till time has robbed them of the more specious blossoms. Few, like Mrs. Malaprop and the orange-tree, are rich in both at once.

Mrs. M. Sir, you overpower me with good breeding—[*Aside.*] He is the very pine-apple of politeness!—You are not ignorant, Captain, that this giddy girl has, somehow, contrived to fix her affections on a beggarly, strolling, eaves-dropping ensign, whom none of us have seen, and nobody knows anything of.

Capt. A. Oh, I have heard of the silly affair before. I'm not at all prejudiced against her on that account.

Mrs. M. You are very good and very considerate, Captain. I am sure I have done everything in my power since I exploded the affair; long ago I laid my positive conjunctions on her, never to think on the fellow again; I have since laid Sir Anthony's preposition before her;

but, I am sorry to say, she seems resolved to decline every particle that I enjoin her.

Capt. A. It must be very distressing, indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. M. Oh, it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree!—I thought she had persisted from corresponding with him; but behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow—I believe I have it in my pocket.

Capt. A. Oh, the devil! my last note! [*Aside.*

Mrs. M. Ay, here it is.

Capt. A. Ay, my note, indeed! Oh, the little traitress, Lucy! [*Aside.*

Mrs. M. There, perhaps you may know the writing. [*Gives him the Letter.*

Capt. A. I think I have seen the hand before—yes, I certainly must have seen this hand before.

Mrs. M. Nay, but read it, Captain.

Capt. A. [*Reads.*] "My soul's idol, my adored Lydia!" Very tender, indeed!

Mrs. M. Tender! ay, and profane, too, o' my conscience.

Capt. A. "I am excessively alarmed at the intelligence you send me, the more so as my new rival"——

Mrs. M. That's you, sir.

Capt. A. "Has universally the character of being an accomplished gentleman, and a man of honor."—Well, that's handsome enough.

Mrs. M. Oh, the fellow has some design in writing so.

Capt. A. That he had, I'll answer for him, ma'am.

Mrs. M. But go on, sir—you'll see presently.

Capt. A. "As for the old weather-beaten she-dragon, who guards you"—Who can he mean by that?

Mrs. M. Me, sir!—me!—he means me! There—what do you think now?—but go on a little further.

Capt. A. Impudent scoundrel!—"it shall go hard, but

I will elude her vigilance! as I am told that the same ridiculous vanity, which makes her dress up her coarse features, and deck her dull chat with hard words which she don't understand"——

Mrs. M. There, sir, an attack upon my language! what do you think of that?—an aspersion upon my parts of speech! was ever such a brute! Sure, if I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs!

Capt. A. He deserves to be hanged and quartered! Let me see—"same ridiculous vanity"——

Mrs. M. You need not read it again, sir!

Capt. A. I beg pardon, ma'am—"does also lay her open to the grossest deceptions from flattery and pretended admiration"—an impudent coxcomb—"so that I have a scheme to see you shortly, with the old harridan's consent, and even to make her a go-between in our interviews."—was ever such assurance!

Mrs. M. Did you ever hear anything like it? He'll elude my vigilance, will he?—yes, yes! ha! ha! he's very likely to enter these doors!—we'll try who can plot best.

Capt. A. So we will, ma'am—so we will. Ha! ha! ha! a conceited puppy! ha! ha! ha!—Well, but Mrs. Malaprop, as the girl seems so infatuated by this fellow, suppose you were to wink at her corresponding with him for a little time—let her even plot an elopement with him—then do you connive at her escape—while I, just in the nick, will have the fellow laid by the heels, and fairly contrive to carry her off in his stead.

Mrs. M. I am delighted with the scheme; never was any thing better perpetrated.

Capt. A. But, pray, could I not see the lady for a few minutes now?—I should like to try her temper a little.

Mrs. M. Why, I don't know—I doubt she is not pre-

pared for a visit of this kind. There is a decorum in these matters.

Capt. A. O, Lord, she won't mind me!—only tell her, Beverley——

Mrs. M. Sir!

Capt. A. Gently, good tongue! [*Aside.*

Mrs. M. What did you say of Beverley?

Capt. A. Oh, I was going to propose that you should tell her, by way of jest, that it was Beverley who was below—she'd come down fast enough then—ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. M. 'Twould be a trick she well deserves; besides, you know, the fellow tells her he'll get my consent to see her—ha! ha! Let him, if he can, I say again. Lydia, come down here! [*Calling.*] He'll make me a go-between in their interviews!—ha! ha! ha! Come down, I say, Lydia! I don't wonder at your laughing—ha! ha! ha! his impudence is truly ridiculous.

Capt. A. 'Tis very ridiculous, upon my soul, ma'am! —ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. M. The little hussy won't hear. Well, I'll go and tell her at once who it is—she shall know that Captain Absolute is come to wait on her; and I'll make her behave as becomes a young woman.

Capt. A. As you please, ma'am.

Mrs. M. For the present, Captain, your servant. Ah, you've not done laughing yet, I see—elude my vigilance! yes, yes—Ha! ha! ha! [*Exit.*

Capt. A. Ha! ha! ha! one would think, now, that I might throw off all disguise at once, and seize my prize with security; but such is Lydia's caprice, that to undeceive were probably to lose her. I'll see whether she knows me. [*Walks aside, surveying the Pictures.*

Enter LYDIA.

Lyd. What a scene am I now to go through! surely

nothing can be more dreadful than to be obliged to listen to the loathsome addresses of a stranger to one's heart. I have heard of girls persecuted as I am, who have appealed in behalf of their favoured lover to the generosity of his rival: suppose I were to try it—there stands the hated rival—an officer, too!—but, oh, how unlike my Beverley! I wonder he don't begin—truly, he seems a very negligent wooer!—quite at his ease, upon my word!—I'll speak first—Mr. Absolute!

Capt. A. Ma'am. [*Turns around.*

Lyd. Oh, heavens! Beverley!

Capt. A. Hush!—hush, my life! softly! be not surprised!

Lyd. I am so astonished! and so terrified! and so overjoyed!—for heaven's sake, how came you here?

Capt. A. Briefly—I have deceived your aunt—I was informed that my new rival was to visit here this evening, and contriving to have him kept away, have passed myself on her for Captain Absolute.

Lyd. Oh, charming! And she really takes you for young Absolute?

Capt. A. Oh, she's convinced of it.

Lyd. Ha! ha! ha! I can't forbear laughing, to think how her sagacity is overreached.

Capt. A. But we trifle with our precious moments—such another opportunity may not occur; then let me conjure my kind, my condescending angel, to fix the time when I may rescue her from undeserved persecution, and, with a licensed warmth, plead for my reward.

Lyd. Will you then, Beverley, consent to forfeit that portion of my paltry wealth?—that burden on the wings of love?

Capt. A. Oh, come to me—rich only thus—in loveliness! Bring no portion to me but thy love—'twill be generous in you, Lydia—for well you know, it is the only dower your poor Beverley can repay.

Lyd. How persuasive are his words—how charming will poverty be with him! [*Aside.*

Capt. A. Ah! my soul, what a life will we then live! Love shall be our idol and support! We will worship him with a monastic strictness; abjuring all earthly toys, to center every thought and action there. Proud of calamity, we will enjoy the wreck of wealth; while the surrounding gloom of adversity shall make the flame of our pure love show doubly bright. By heavens, I would fling all goods of fortune from me with a prodigal hand, to enjoy the scene where I might clasp my Lydia to my bosom and say the world affords no smile to me but hers. [*Embracing her.*]—If she holds out now, the devil is in it. [*Aside.*

Lyd. Now could I fly with him to the antipodes—but my persecution is not yet come to a crisis. [*Aside.*

Enter MRS. MALAPROP, *listening.*

Mrs. M. I am impatient to know how the little hussy deports herself. [*Aside.*

Capt. A. So pensive, Lydia!—is then your warmth abated?

Mrs. M. Warmth abated?—so!—she has been in a passion, I suppose. [*Aside.*

Lyd. No, nor ever can, while I have life.

Mrs. M. An ill-tempered little devil! She'll be in a passion all her life, will she? [*Aside.*

Lyd. Think not the idle threats of my ridiculous aunt can ever have any weight with me.

Mrs. M. Very dutiful, upon my word!

Lyd. Let her choice be Captain Absolute, but Beverley is mine.

Mrs. M. I am astonished at her assurance!—to his face—this to his face! [*Aside.*

Capt. A. Thus, then, let me enforce my suit.

[*Kneeling.*

Mrs. M. Ay—poor young man!—down on his knees entreating for pity!—I can contain no longer. [*Aside.* —Why, thou vixen!—I have overheard you.

Capt. A. Oh, confound her vigilance! [*Aside.*

Mrs. M. Captain Absolute, I know not how to apologize for her shocking rudeness.

Capt. A. [*Aside.*] So, all's safe, I find. [*Aloud.*]—I have hopes, madam, that time will bring the young lady——

Mrs. M. Oh, there's nothing to be hoped for from her! she's as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of Nile.

Lyd. Nay, madam, what do you charge me with now!

Mrs. M. Why, thou unblushing rebel—didn't you tell this gentleman to his face, that you loved another better?—didn't you say you never would be his?

Lyd. No, madam, I did not.

Mrs. M. Good heavens, what assurance!—Lydia, Lydia, you ought to know that lying don't become a young woman! Didn't you boast that Beverley—that stroller, Beverley—possessed your heart?—Tell me that, I say!

Lyd. 'Tis true, ma'am, and none but Beverley——

Mrs. M. Hold!—hold, assurance!—you shall not be so rude.

Capt. A. Nay, pray, Mrs. Malaprop, don't stop the young lady's speech: she's very welcome to talk thus—it does not hurt me in the least, I assure you.

Mrs. M. You are too good, Captain—too amiably patient:—but come with me, miss. Let us see you again soon, Captain—remember what we have fixed.

Capt. A. I shall, ma'am.

Mrs. M. Come, take a graceful leave of the gentleman.

Lyd. May every blessing wait on my Beverley, my loved Bever——

Mrs. M. Hussy! I'll choke the words in your throat! Come along—come along.

[*Exeunt, Capt. Absolute kissing his hand to Lydia. Mrs. Malaprop stopping her from speaking.*

SCENE IV.—*Acres' Lodgings.*

ACRES *and* DAVID *discovered; Acres just dressed.*

Acres. Indeed, David—do you think I become it so?

Dav. You are quite another creature, believe me, master, by the mass! an' we've any luck we shall see the Devon monkerony in all the print-shops in Bath!

Acres. Dress does make a difference, David.

Dav. 'Tis all in all, I think. Difference! why, an' you were to go now to Clod Hall, I am certain the old lady wouldn't know you: Master Butler wouldn't believe his own eyes, and Mrs. Pickle would cry, "Lard presarve me!" our dairy maid would come giggling to the door, and I warrant Dolly Tester, your honour's favourite, would blush like my waistcoat—Oons! I'll wager a gallon, there an't a dog in the house but would bark, and I question whether Phillis would wag a hair of her tail!

Acres. Ay, David, there's nothing like polishing.

Dav. So I says of your honour's boots; but the boy never heeds me!

Acres. But, David, has Mr. De la Grace been here? I must rub my balancing, and chasing, and boring.

Dav. I'll call again, sir.

Acres. Do—and see if there are any letters for me at the post-office.

Dav. I will.—By the mass!—I can't help looking at your head!—if I hadn't been at the cooking, I wish I may die if I should have known the dish again myself!

[*Exit.—Acres practising a dancing step.*

Acres. Sink, slide—coupee.—Confound the first inventors of cotillons, say I!—they are as bad as algebra, to us country gentlemen—I can walk a minuet easy enough, when I am forced!—and I have been accounted a good stick in a country-dance.—Odd jigs and tabors! I never valued your cross-over to couple—figure in—right and left—and I'd foot it with e'er a captain in the county!—but these outlandish heathen allemandes and cotillons are quite beyond me!—I shall never prosper at 'em, that's sure—mine are true-born English legs—they don't understand their cursed French lingo!—their *pas* this, and *pas* that, and *pas* t'other!—damn me! my feet don't like to be called paws! No, 'tis certain I have most Antigallican toes!

Enter SERVANT.

Ser. Here is Sir Lucius O'Trigger to wait on you, sir.

Acres. Show him in.

Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER.

Sir L. Mr. Acres, I am delighted to see you.

Acres. My dear Sir Lucius, I kiss your hands.

Sir L. Pray, my friend, what has brought you so suddenly to Bath?

Acres. 'Faith, I have followed Cupid's jack-a-lantern, and find myself in a quagmire at last!—In short, I have been very ill-used, Sir Lucius. I don't choose to mention names, but look on me as a very ill-used gentleman.

Sir L. Pray, what is the case?—I ask no names.

Acres. Mark me, Sir Lucius; I fall as deep as need be in love with a young lady—her friends take my part—I follow her to Bath—send word of my arrival; and receive answer, that the lady is to be otherwise disposed of. This, Sir Lucius, I call being ill-used.

Sir L. Very ill, upon my conscience!—Pray, can you divine the cause of it?

Acres. Why, there's the matter: she has another lover, one Beverley, who, I am told, is now in Bath.—Odds slanders and lies! he must be at the bottom of it.

Sir L. A rival in the case, is there?—and you think he has supplanted you unfairly?

Acres. Unfairly! to be sure he has. He never could have done it fairly.

Sir L. Then sure you know what is to be done!

Acres. Not I, upon my soul!

Sir L. We wear no swords here, but you understand me?

Acres. What! fight him?

Sir L. Ay, to be sure: what can I mean else?

Acres. But he has given me no provocation.

Sir L. Now, I think he has given you the greatest provocation in the world. Can a man commit a more heinous offence against another, than to fall in love with the same woman? Oh, by my soul, it is the most unpardonable breach of friendship.

Acres. Breach of friendship! Ay, ay; but I have no acquaintance with this man. I never saw him in my life.

Sir L. That's no argument at all—he has the less right, then, to take such a liberty.

Acres. 'Gad, that's true—I grow full of anger, Sir Lucius!—I fire apace! Odds hilts and blades! I find a man may have a deal of valour in him, and not know it!—But couldn't I contrive to have a little right on my side?

Sir L. What the devil signifies right when your honour is concerned? Do you think Achilles, or my little Alexander the Great, ever inquired where the right lay? No, by my soul, they drew their broad-swords, and left the lazy sons of peace to settle the justice of it.

Acres. Your words are a grenadier's march to my heart! I believe courage must be catching!—I certainly do feel a kind of valour rising as it were—a kind of courage, as I may say.—Odds flints, pans, and triggers! I'll challenge him directly.

Sir L. Ah, my little friend! if I had Blunderbuss Hall here, I could show you a range of ancestry, in the O'Trigger line, that would furnish the New Room, every one of whom had killed his man!—For though the mansion-house and dirty acres have slipped through my fingers, I thank heaven, our honor and the family pictures are as fresh as ever.

Acres. Oh, Sir Lucius, I have had ancestors, too!—every man of them colonel or captain in the militia!—Odds balls and barrels! say no more—I'm braced for it. The thunder of your words has soured the milk of human kindness in my breast!—Zounds! as the man in the play says, "I could do such deeds"——

Sir L. Come, come, there must be no passion at all in the case—these things should always be done civilly.

Acres. I must be in a passion, Sir Lucius—I must be in a rage—Dear Sir Lucius, let me be in a rage, if you love me. Come, here's pen and paper. [*Sits down to write.*] I would the ink were red!—Indite, I say, indite!—How shall I begin? Odds bullets and blades! I'll write a good bold hand, however.

Sir L. Pray, compose yourself.

Acres. Come—now, shall I begin with an oath? Do, Sir Lucius, let me begin with a damme?

Sir L. Pho! pho! do the thing decently, and like a Christian. Begin now—"Sir,"——

Acres. That's too civil, by half.

Sir L. "To prevent the confusion that might arise"——

Acres. Well——

Sir L. "From our both addressing the same lady"——

Acres. Ay—there's the reason—"same lady"—Well——

Sir L. "I shall expect the honour of your company"——

Acres. Zounds! I'm not asking him to dinner!

Sir L. Pray, be easy.

Acres. Well then, "honour of your company"——

Sir L. "To settle our pretensions"——

Acres. Well.

Sir L. Let me see—ay, King's-Mead-Fields will do—"in King's-Mead's-Fields."

Acres. So, that's done—Well, I'll fold it up presently; my own crest, a hand and dagger, shall be the seal.

Sir L. You see, now, this little explanation will put a stop at once to all confusion or misunderstanding that might arise between you.

Acres. Ay, we fight to prevent any misunderstanding.

Sir L. Now, I'll leave you to fix your own time. Take my advice, and you'll decide it this evening, if you can; then, let the worst come to it, 'twill be off your mind to-morrow.

Acres. Very true.

Sir L. So I shall see nothing of you, unless it be by letter, till the evening. I would do myself the honour to carry your message; but, to tell you a secret, I believe I shall have just such another affair on my own hands. There is a gay captain here, who put a jest on me lately, at the expense of my country, and I only want to fall in with the gentleman to call him out.

Acres. By my valor, I should like to see you fight first! Odds life, I should like to see you kill him, if it was only to get a little lesson!

Sir L. I shall be very proud of instructing you. Well, for the present—but remember now, when you meet your antagonist, do every thing in a mild and agreeable manner. Let your courage be as keen, but at the same time as polished as your sword.

[*Exeunt, severally.*

ACT IV

Scene I.—*Acres' Lodgings*

Acres *and* David *discovered*

Dav. Then, by the mass, sir, I would do no such thing! Ne'er a Sir Lucius O'Trigger in the kingdom should make me fight, when I wasn't so minded. Oons! what will the old lady say, when she hears o't?

Acres. Ah! David, if you had heard Sir Lucius!—Odds sparks and flames! he would have roused your valour.

Dav. Not he, indeed. I hate such bloodthirsty cormorants. Look'ee, master, if you wanted a bout at boxing, quarter-staff, or short-staff, I should never be the man to bid you cry off: but for your curst sharps and snaps, I never knew any good come of 'em.

Acres. But my honour, David, my honour! I must be very careful of my honour.

Dav. Ay, by the mass! and I would be very careful of it; and I think, in return, my honor couldn't do less than to be very careful of me.

Acres. Odds blades! David, no gentleman will ever risk the loss of his honour!

Dav. I say, then, it would be but civil in honour never to risk the loss of a gentleman.—Look'ee, master, this honour seems to me to be a marvellous false friend; ay, truly, a very courtier-like servant. Put the case, I was a gentleman (which, thank heaven, no one can say of me); well—my honour makes me quarrel with another gentleman of my acquaintance. So—we fight. (Pleasant enough that). Boh! I kill him—(the more's

my luck.) Now, pray, who gets the profit of it?—why, my honour. But, put the case that he kills me! by the mass! I go to the worms, and my honour whips over to my enemy.

Acres. No, David. In that case!—odds crowns and laurels! your honour follows you to the grave!

Dav. Now, that's just the place where I could make a shift to do without it.

Acres. Zounds! David, you are a coward!—It doesn't become my valour to listen to you.—What, shall I disgrace my ancestors?—Think of that, David—think what it would be to disgrace my ancestors!

Dav. Under favour, the surest way of not disgracing them, is to keep as long as you can out of their company. Look'ee, now, master, to go to them in such haste—with an ounce of lead in your brains—I should think it might as well be let alone. Our ancestors are very good kind of folks; but they are the last people I should choose to have a visiting acquaintance with.

Acres. But, David, now, you don't think there is such very, very great danger, hey? Oddslife! people often fight without any mischief done!

Dav. By the mass, I think 'tis ten to one against you. Oons! here to meet some lion-headed fellow, I warrant, with his damned double-barrelled swords, and cut-and-thrust pistols!—Lord bless us! it makes me tremble to think on't—those be such desperate bloody-minded weapons! Well, I never could abide 'em!—from a child I never could fancy 'em!—I suppose there an't been so merciless a beast in the world as your loaded pistol!

Acres. Zounds! I won't be afraid!—Odds fire and fury! you sha'nt make me afraid.—Here is the challenge and I have sent for my dear friend, Jack Absolute, to carry it for me.

Dav. Ay, i' the name of mischief, let him be the messenger.—For my part, I wouldn't lend a hand to it,

for the best horse in your stable. By the mass! it don't look like another letter! It is, as I may say, a designing and malicious-looking letter; and I warrant smells of gunpowder like a soldier's pouch! Oons! I wouldn't swear it mayn't go off!

Acres. Out, you poltroon!—you ha'n't the valour of a grasshopper.

Dav. Well, I say no more—'twill be sad news, to be sure, at Clod Hall!—but I ha' done. How Phillis will howl when she hears of it!—Ah, poor bitch, she little thinks what shooting her master's good after! And I warrant old Crop, who has carried your honour, field and road, these ten years, will curse the hour he was born! [*Whimpering.*

Acres. It won't do, David—I am determined to fight; so get along, you coward, while I'm in the mind.

Enter SERVANT.

Ser. Captain Absolute, sir.

Acres. Oh! show him up. [*Exit Servant.*

Dav. Well, heaven send we be all alive this time to-morrow.

Acres. What's that?—Don't provoke me, David!

Dav. Good-bye, master. [*Sobbing.*

Acres. Get along, you cowardly, dastardly, croaking raven. [*Exit David.*

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Capt. A. What's the matter, Bob?

Acres. A vile, sheep-hearted blockhead! If I hadn't the valour of St. George and the dragon to boot——

Capt. A. But what did you want with me, Bob?

Acres. Oh!—There—— [*Gives him the challenge.*

Capt. A. [*Reads.*] *"To Ensign Beverley."* [*Aside.*]

So—what's going on now! [*Aloud.*]—Well, what's this?

Acres. A challenge!

Capt. A. Indeed!—Why, you won't fight him, will you, Bob?

Acres. 'Egad, but I will, Jack. Sir Lucius has wrought me to it. He has left me full of rage, and I'll fight this evening, that so much good passion mayn't be wasted.

Capt. A. But what have I to do with this?

Acres. Why, as I think you know something of this fellow, I want you to find him out for me, and give him this mortal defiance.

Capt. A. Well, give it me, and trust me he gets it.

Acres. Thank you, my dear friend, my dear Jack; but it is giving you a great deal of trouble.

Capt. A. Not in the least—I beg you won't mention it. No trouble in the world, I assure you.

Acres. You are very kind.—What it is to have a friend!—You couldn't be my second, could you, Jack?

Capt. A. Why, no, Bob—not in this affair—it would not be quite so proper.

Acres. Well, then, I must get my friend, Sir Lucius. I shall have your good wishes, however, Jack?

Capt. A. Whenever he meets you, believe me.

Enter SERVANT.

Ser. Sir Anthony Absolute is below, inquiring for the captain.

Capt. A. I'll come instantly. [*Exit Servant.*] Well, my little hero, success attend you. [*Going.*

Acres. Stay, stay, Jack—if Beverley should ask you what kind of a man your friend Acres is, do tell him I am a devil of a fellow—will you, Jack?

Capt. A. To be sure I shall. I'll say you are a determined dog—hey, Bob?

Acres. Ay, do, do—and if that frightens him, 'egad, perhaps he mayn't come. So tell him I generally kill a man a week: will you, Jack?

Capt. A. I will, I will; I'll say you are called in the country Fighting Bob.

Acres. Right, right—'tis all to prevent mischief; for I don't want to take his life, if I clear my honour.

Capt. A. No!—that's very kind of you.

Acres. Why, you don't wish me to kill him, do you, Jack?

Capt. A. No, upon my soul, I do not. But a devil of a fellow, hey? [*Going.*

Acres. True, true—but stay—stay Jack,—you may add, that you never saw me in such a rage before—a most devouring rage!

Capt. A. I will, I will.

Acres. Remember, Jack—a determined dog!

Capt. A. Ay, ay, Fighting Bob.

[*Exeunt, severally.*

SCENE II.—*Mrs. Malaprop's Lodgings.*

Enter MRS. MALAPROP *and* LYDIA.

Mrs. M. Why, thou perverse one!—tell me what you can object to in him? Isn't he a handsome man?—tell me that. A genteel man? a pretty figure of a man?

Lyd. [*Aside.*] She little thinks whom she is praising. [*Aloud.*] So is Beverley, ma'am.

Mrs. M. No caparisons, miss, if you please. Caparisons don't become a young woman. No! Captain Absolute is indeed a fine gentleman.

Lyd. Ay, the Captain Absolute you have seen. [*Aside.*

Mrs. M. Then he's so well bred;—so full of alacrity and adulation!—and has so much to say for himself, in such good language, too! His physiognomy so gram-

matical. Then his presence is so noble! I protest, when I saw him, I thought of what Hamlet says in the play:—

"Hesperian curls—the front of Job himself!—
An eye, like March, to threaten at command!—
A station, like Harry Mercury, new——"

Something about kissing—on a hill—however, the similitude struck me directly.

Lyd. How enraged she'll be presently, when she discovers her mistake? [*Aside.*

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute are below, ma'am.

Mrs. M. Show them up here. [*Exit Servant.*] Now, Lydia, I insist on your behaving as becomes a young woman. Show your good breeding, at least, though you have forgot your duty.

Lyd. Madam, I have told you my resolution!—I shall not only give him no encouragement, but I won't even speak to, or look at him. [*Flings herself into a chair, with her face from the door.*

Enter SIR ANTHONY *and* CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Sir A. Here we are, Mrs. Malaprop; come to mitigate the frowns of unrelenting beauty,—and difficulty enough I had to bring this fellow. I don't know what's the matter, but if I had not held him by force, he'd have given me the slip.

Mrs. M. You have infinite trouble, Sir Anthony, in the affair. I am ashamed for the cause! [*Aside to Lydia.*] Lydia, Lydia, rise, I beseech you!—pay your respects!

Sir A. I hope, madam, that Miss Languish has reflected on the worth of this gentleman, and the regard

due to her aunt's choice, and my alliance. [*Aside to Capt. A.*] Now, Jack, speak to her.

Capt. A. [*Aside.*] What the devil shall I do? [*Aside to Sir A.*] You see, sir, she won't even look at me whilst you are here. I knew she wouldn't!—I told you so. Let me entreat you, sir, to leave us together!

[*Captain A. seems to expostulate with his father.*

Lyd. [*Aside.*] I wonder I ha'n't heard my aunt exclaim yet! sure she can't have looked at him!—perhaps the regimentals are alike, and she is something blind.

Sir A. I say, sir, I won't stir a foot yet!

Mrs. M. I am sorry to say, Sir Anthony, that my affluence over my niece is very small. [*Aside to Lydia.*] Turn round, Lydia, I blush for you!

Sir A. May I not flatter myself, that Miss Languish will assign what cause of dislike she can have to my son! [*Aside to Capt. A.*] Why don't you begin, Jack? Speak, you puppy,—speak!

Mrs. M. It is impossible, Sir Anthony, she can have any. She will not say she has.—[*Aside to Lydia.*] Answer, hussy! Why don't you answer?

Sir A. Then, madam, I trust that a childish and hasty predilection will be no bar to Jack's happiness. [*Aside to Capt. A.*] Zounds! sirrah! why don't you speak?

Lyd. [*Aside.*] I think my lover seems as little inclined to conversation as myself.—How strangely blind my aunt must be!

Capt. A. Hem! hem! Madam—hem! [*Captain Absolute attempts to speak, then returns to Sir Anthony.*] 'Faith! sir, I am so confounded!—and so—so confused! I told you I should be so, sir,—I knew it. The—the tremor of my passion entirely takes away my presence of mind.

Sir A. But it don't take away your voice, fool, does it? Go up, and speak to her directly!

[*Capt. A. makes signs to Mrs. Malaprop to leave them together.*]

Mrs. M. Sir Anthony, shall we leave them together?—[*Aside to Lydia.*] Ah! you stubborn little vixen!

Sir A. Not yet, ma'am, not yet!—[*Aside to Capt. A.*] What the devil are you at? Unlock your jaws, sirrah, or——

Capt. A. [*Draws near Lydia.*] [*Aside.*] Now heaven send she may be too sullen to look round! I must disguise my voice.—[*Speaks in a low, hoarse tone.*] Will not Miss Languish lend an ear to the mild accents of true love? Will not——

Sir A. What the devil ails the fellow? Why don't you speak out?—not stand croaking like a frog in a quinsy!

Capt. A. The—the—excess of my awe, and my—my modesty quite choke me!

Sir A. Ah! your modesty again! I'll tell you what, Jack, if you don't speak out directly, and glibly, too, I shall be in such a rage! Mrs. Malaprop, I wish the lady would favour us with something more than a side-front.

[*Mrs. Malaprop seems to chide Lydia.*

Capt. A. [*Aside.*] So! all will out, I see! [*Goes up to Lydia, speaks softly.*] Be not surprised, my Lydia; suppress all surprise at present.

Lyd. [*Aside.*] Heavens! 'tis Beverley's voice!—Sure, he can't have imposed on Sir Anthony, too! [*Looks round by degrees, then starts up.*] Is this possible!—my Beverley! how can this be?—my Beverley?

Capt. A. Ah! 'tis all over. [*Aside.*

Sir A. Beverley!—the devil—Beverley! What can the girl mean? This is my son, Jack Absolute.

Mrs. M. For shame, hussy! for shame!—your head runs so on that fellow, that you have him always in your eyes!—beg Captain Absolute's pardon, directly.

Lyd. I see no Captain Absolute, but my loved Beverley!

Sir A. Zounds, the girl's mad—her brain's turned by reading!

Mrs. M. O'my conscience, I believe so!—What do you mean by Beverley, hussy?—You saw Captain Absolute before to-day;—there he is—your husband that shall be.

Lyd. With all my soul, ma'am—when I refuse my Beverley——

Sir A. Oh! she's as mad as Bedlam!—or has this fellow been playing us a rogue's trick! Come here, sirrah, who the devil are you?

Capt. A. 'Faith, sir, I am not quite clear myself, but I'll endeavour to recollect.

Sir A. Are you my son, or not?—answer for your mother, you dog, if you won't for me.

Mrs. M. Ay, sir, who are you? O mercy! I begin to suspect!——

Capt. A. [*Aside.*] Ye powers of impudence, befriend me!—[*Aloud.*] Sir Anthony, most assuredly I am your wife's son; and that I sincerely believe myself to be yours also, I hope my duty has always shown. Mrs. Malaprop, I am your most respectful admirer, and shall be proud to add affectionate nephew. I need not tell my Lydia that she sees her faithful Beverley, who, knowing the singular generosity of her temper, assumed that name and station, which has proved a test of the most disinterested love, which he now hopes to enjoy, in a more elevated character.

Lyd. So!—there will be no elopement after all!

[*Sullenly.*

Sir A. Upon my soul, Jack, thou art a very impudent fellow! To do you justice, I think I never saw a piece of more consummate assurance!

Capt. A. Oh, you flatter me, sir,—you compliment,—

'tis my modesty, you know, sir,—my modesty that has stood in my way.

Sir A. Well, I am glad you are not the dull insensible varlet you pretend to be, however! I'm glad you have made a fool of your father, you dog—I am. So, this was your penitence, your duty, and obedience! I thought it was damn'd sudden. "You never heard their names before," not you! "What, the Languishes of Worcestershire," hey?—"if you could please me in the affair, 'twas all you desired!" Ah! you dissembling villain! What! [*Pointing to Lydia.*] "she squints, don't she? a little red-haired girl," hey? Why, you hypocritical young rascal—I wonder you a'n't ashamed to hold up your head!

Capt. A. 'Tis with difficulty, sir—I am confused—very much confused, as you must perceive.

Mrs. M. Oh, lud! Sir Anthony!—a new light breaks in upon me!—hey!—how! what! Captain, did you write the letters, then? What!—am I to thank you for the elegant compilation of an "old weather-beaten she-dragon,"—hey? Oh, mercy!—was it you that reflected on my parts of speech?

Capt. A. Dear sir!—my modesty will be overpowered at last, if you don't assist me.—I shall certainly not be able to stand it.

Sir A. Come, come, Mrs. Malaprop, we must forget and forgive;—odds life! matters have taken so clever a turn all of a sudden, that I could find in my heart to be so good-humoured! and so gallant!—hey! Mrs. Malaprop!

Mrs. M. Well, Sir Anthony, since you desire it, we will not anticipate the past!—so mind, young people—our retrospection will be all to the future.

Sir A. Come, we must leave them together, Mrs. Malaprop; they long to fly into each other's arms, I warrant! Jack—isn't the cheek as I said, hey?—and the eye, you

rogue!—and the lip—hey? Come, Mrs. Malaprop, we'll not disturb their tenderness—theirs is the time of life for happiness!—[*Sings.*] *Youth's the season made for joy*—hey!—Odds life! I'm in such spirits—I don't know what I could not do! Permit me, ma'am.—[*Gives his hand to Mrs. Malaprop.—Sings.*]—*Tol de rol*—'gad, I should like to have a little fooling myself—*Tol de rol! de rol!*

[*Exit singing, and handing Mrs. Malaprop off.—Lydia sits sullenly in her chair.*

Capt. A. [*Aside.*] So much thought bodes me no good. [*Aloud.*] So grave, Lydia!

Lyd. Sir!

Capt. A. [*Aside.*] So! 'egad! I thought as much!—that damned monosyllable has froze me! [*Aloud.*] What Lydia, now that we are as happy in our friends' consent as in our mutual vows——

Lyd. Friends' consent, indeed! [*Peevishly.*

Capt. A. Come, come, we must lay aside some of our romance—a little wealth and comfort may be endured, after all. And for your fortune, the lawyers shall make such settlements as——

Lyd. Lawyers! I hate lawyers!

Capt. A. Nay, then, we will not wait for their lingering forms, but instantly procure the license, and——

Lyd. The license!—I hate licenses!

Capt. A. Oh, my love! be not so unkind!—thus let me entreat—— [*Kneeling.*

Lyd. Psha! what signifies kneeling, when you know I must have you?

Capt. A. [*Rising.*] Nay, madam, there shall be no constraint upon your inclinations, I promise you.—If I have lost your heart—I resign the rest.—[*Aside.*] 'Gad, I must try what a little spirit will do!

Lyd. [*Rising.*] Then, sir, let me tell you, the interest you had there was acquired by a mean, unmanly imposi-

tion, and deserves the punishment of fraud.—What, you have been treating me like a child!—humouring my romance; and laughing, I suppose, at your success!

Capt. A. You wrong me, Lydia, you wrong me—only hear——

Lyd. So while I fondly imagined we were deceiving my relations, and flattered myself that I should outwit and incense them all—behold, my hopes are to be crushed at once, by my aunt's consent and approbation—and I am myself the only dupe at last! [*Walking about in a heat.*]—But here, sir, here is the picture—Beverley's picture! [*Taking a miniature from her bosom*]—which I have worn, night and day in spite of threats and entreaties!—There, sir; [*Flings it to him*]—and be assured, I throw the original from my heart as easily.

Capt. A. Nay, nay, ma'am, we will not differ as to that. Here—[*Taking out a picture*]—here is Miss Lydia Languish.—What a difference!—ay, there is the heavenly assenting smile that first gave soul and spirit to my hopes!—those are the lips which sealed a vow, as yet scarce dry in Cupid's calendar!—and there the half-resentful blush, that would have checked the ardour of my thanks. Well, all that's past; all over, indeed! There, madam,—in beauty, that copy is not equal to you; but in my mind, its merit over the original, in being still the same, is such—that—I cannot find in my heart to part with it. [*Puts it up again.*

Lyd. [*Softening.*] 'Tis your own doing, sir—I—I—I suppose you are perfectly satisfied.

Capt. A. Oh, most certainly—sure, now, this is much better than being in love!—ha! ha! ha!—there's some spirit in this! What signifies breaking some scores of solemn promises; all that's of no consequence, you know. To be sure, people will say, that Miss Lydia didn't know her own mind—but never mind that: or, perhaps, they may be ill-natured enough to hint, that the gentleman

grew tired of the lady, and forsook her—but don't let that fret you.

Lyd. There's no bearing his insolence!

[*Bursts into tears.*

Enter MRS. MALAPROP *and* SIR ANTHONY.

Mrs. M. Come, we must interrupt your billing and cooing awhile.

Lyd. This is worse than your treachery and deceit, you base ingrate! [*Sobbing.*

Sir A. What the devil's the matter now! Zounds! Mrs. Malaprop, this is the oddest billing and cooing I ever heard!—but what the deuce is the meaning of it? I'm quite astonished!

Capt. A. Ask the lady, sir.

Mrs. M. Oh, mercy! I'm quite analyzed, for my part—why, Lydia, what is the reason of this?

Lyd. Ask the gentleman, ma'am.

Sir A. Zounds! I shall be in a frenzy!—why, Jack, you are not come out to be any one else, are you?

Mrs. M. Ay, sir, there's no more trick, is there?—you are not, like Cerberus, three gentlemen at once, are you?

Capt. A. You'll not let me speak—I say the lady can account for this much better than I can.

Lyd. Ma'am, you once commanded me never to think of Beverley again—there is the man—I now obey you: for from this moment, I renounce him for ever. [*Exit.*

Mrs. M. Oh, mercy and miracles! what a turn here is. Why, sure, Captain, you haven't behaved disrespectfully to my niece?

Sir A. Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—now I see it—Ha! ha! ha!—now I see it—you have been too lively, Jack.

Capt. A. Nay, sir, upon my word——

Sir A. Come, no lying, Jack—I'm sure 'twas so.

Mrs. M. O Lud! Sir Anthony!—O fy! Captain!

Capt. A. Upon my soul, ma'am——

Sir A. Come, no excuse, Jack; why, your father, you rogue, was so before you: the blood of the Absolutes was always impatient. Ha! ha! ha! poor little Lydia! why, you've frightened her, you dog, you have.

Capt. A. By all that's good, sir——

Sir A. Zounds! say no more, I tell you—Mrs. Malaprop shall make your peace. You must make his peace, Mrs. Malaprop; you must tell her, 'tis Jack's way—tell her, 'tis all our ways—it runs in the blood of our family! Come away, Jack, ha! ha! ha! Mrs. Malaprop—a young villain! [*Pushes him out.*

Mrs. M. Oh, Sir Anthony!—Oh, fy, Captain!

[*Exeunt,* R.

SCENE III.—*The North Parade.*

Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER.

Sir L. I wonder where this Captain Absolute hides himself. Upon my conscience, these officers are always in one's way, in love affairs: I remember I might have married Lady Dorothy Carmine, if it had not been for a little rogue of a Major, who ran away with her before she could get a sight of me! And I wonder, too, what it is the ladies can see in them to be so fond of them—unless it be a touch of the old serpent in 'em, that makes the little creatures be caught, like vipers, with a bit of red cloth. Ha! isn't this the Captain coming?—'faith, it is! There is a probability of succeeding about that fellow, that is mighty provoking! Who the devil is he talking to? [*Steps aside.*

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Capt. A. To what fine purpose have I been plotting! a noble reward for all my schemes, upon my soul!—a

little gipsy! I did not think her romance could have made her so damned absurd, either. 'Sdeath, I never was in a worse humour in my life! I could cut my own throat, or any other person's, with the greatest pleasure in the world!

Sir L. [*Aside.*] Oh, 'faith! I'm in the luck of it. I never could have found him in a sweeter temper for my purpose—to be sure, I'm just come in the nick; now to enter into conversation with him, and so quarrel genteelly. [*Advances to Captain Absolute.*]—With regard to that matter, Captain, I must beg leave to differ in opinion with you.

Capt. A. Upon my word, then, you must be a very subtle disputant; because, sir, I happened just then to be giving no opinion at all.

Sir L. That's no reason; for give me leave to tell you, a man may think an untruth as well as speak one.

Capt. A. Very true, sir; but if a man never utters his thoughts, I should think they might stand a chance of escaping controversy.

Sir L. Then, sir, you differ in opinion with me, which amounts to the same thing.

Capt. A. Hark'ee, Sir Lucius; if I had not before known you to be a gentleman, upon my soul, I should not have discovered it at this interview; for what you can drive at, unless you mean to quarrel with me, I cannot conceive!

Sir L. I humbly thank you, sir, for the quickness of your apprehension.—[*Bowing.*] You have named the very thing I would be at.

Capt. A. Very well, sir; I shall certainly not baulk your inclinations. But I should be glad you would be pleased to explain your motives.

Sir L. Pray, sir, be easy; the quarrel is a very pretty quarrel, as it stands—we should only spoil it by trying to explain it. However, your memory is very short,

or you could not have forgot an affront you passed on me within this week. So, no more, but name your time and place.

Capt. A. Well, sir, since you are so bent on it, the sooner the better; let it be this evening—here, by the Spring Gardens. We shall scarcely be interrupted.

Sir L. 'Faith! that same interruption, in affairs of this nature, shows very great ill-breeding. I don't know what's the reason, but in England, if a thing of this kind gets wind, people make such a pother, that a gentleman can never fight in peace and quietness. However, if it's the same to you, I should take it as a particular kindness if you'd let us meet in King's-Mead-Fields, as a little business will call me there about six o'clock, and I may despatch both matters at once.

Capt A. 'Tis the same to me exactly. A little after six, then, we will discuss this matter more seriously.

Sir L. If you please, sir; there will be very pretty small-sword light, though it won't do for a long shot. So that matter's settled; and my mind's at ease. [*Exit.*

Enter FAULKLAND.

Capt. A. Well met! I was going to look for you. O Faulkland! all the demons of spite and disappointment have conspired against me! I'm so vex'd, that if I had not the prospect of a resource in being knocked o' the head by-and-by, I should scarce have spirits to tell you the cause.

Faulk. What can you mean?—Has Lydia changed her mind?—I should have thought her duty and inclination would now have pointed to the same object.

Capt. A. Ay, just as the eyes do of a person who squints; when her love-eye was fixed on me, t'other, her eye of duty, was finely obliqued; but when her duty bid her point that same way, off t'other turned on a swivel, and secured its retreat with a frown!

Faulk. But what's the resource you——

Capt. A. Oh, to wind up the whole, a good-natured Irishman here has—[*Mimicking Sir Lucius*] begged to have the pleasure of cutting my throat; and I mean to indulge him—that's all.

Faulk. Prithee, be serious!

Capt. A. 'Tis fact, upon my soul. Sir Lucius O'Trigger—you know him by sight—for some affront, which I am sure I never intended, has obliged me to meet him this evening at six o'clock: 'tis on that account I wished to see you; you must go with me.

Faulk. Nay, there must be some mistake, sure. Sir Lucius shall explain himself, and I dare say matters may be accommodated. But this evening, did you say? I wish it had been any other time.

Capt. A. Why? there will be light enough: there will (as Sir Lucius says) be very pretty small-sword light, though it will not do for a long shot. Confound his long shots.

Faulk. But I am myself a good deal ruffled by a difference I have had with Julia. My vile tormenting temper has made me treat her so cruelly that I shall not be myself till we are reconciled.

Capt. A. By heavens! Faulkland, you don't deserve her!

Enter SERVANT, *gives* FAULKLAND *a letter, and exit.*

Faulk. Oh, Jack! this is from Julia. I dread to open it! I fear it may be to take a last leave!—perhaps to bid me return her letters, and restore—Oh, how I suffer for my folly!

Capt. A. Here, let me see.—[*Takes letter and opens it.*] Ay, a final sentence, indeed!—'tis all over with you, faith!

Faulk. Nay, Jack, don't keep me in suspense!

Capt. A. Hear then—[*Reads.*] "As I am convinced that my dear Faulkland's own reflections have already upbraided him for his last unkindness to me, I will not add a word on the subject. I wish to speak with you as soon as possible.—Yours ever and truly, JULIA."—There's stubbornness and resentment for you!—[*Gives him the letter.*] Why, man, you don't seem one bit happier at this!

Faulk. Oh yes, I am; but—but——

Capt. A. Confound your buts! you never hear anything that would make another man bless himself, but you immediately damn it with a but!

Faulk. Now, Jack, as you are my friend, now honestly—don't you think there is something forward, something indelicate, in this haste to forgive? Women should never sue for reconciliation: that should always come from us. They should retain their coldness till wooed to kindness; and their pardon, like their love, should "not unsought be won."

Capt. A. I have not patience to listen to you! Thou'rt incorrigible! so say no more on the subject. I must go to settle a few matters. Let me see you before six, remember, at my lodgings. A poor, industrious devil like me, who have toiled, and drudged, and plotted to gain my ends, and am at last disappointed by other people's folly, may in pity be allowed to swear and grumble a little; but a captious sceptic in love, a slave to fretfulness and whim, who has no difficulties but of his own creating, is a subject more fit for ridicule than compassion! [*Exit.*

Faulk. I feel his reproaches, yet I would not change this too exquisite nicety for the gross content with which he tramples on the thorns of love! His engaging me in this duel has started an idea in my head, which I will instantly pursue. I'll use it as the touchstone of Julia's sincerity and disinterestedness. If her love

proves pure and sterling ore, my name will rest on it with honour; and once I've stamped it there, I lay aside my doubts for ever! But if the dross of selfishness, the alloy of pride, predominate, 'twill be best to leave her as a toy for some less cautious fool to sigh for! [*Exit.*

ACT V

Scene I.—*Julia's Dressing-Room*

Enter Julia

Jul. How this message has alarmed me! What dreadful accident can he mean? why such charge to be alone? Oh, Faulkland! how many unhappy moments, how many tears, you have cost me!

Enter Faulkland.

What means this? why this caution, Faulkland?

Faulk. Alas, Julia! I am come to take a long farewell.

Jul. Heavens! what do you mean?

Faulk. You see before you a wretch, whose life is forfeited:—Nay, start not; the infirmity of my temper has drawn all this misery on me: I left you fretful and passionate—an untoward accident drew me into a quarrel—the event is, that I must fly this kingdom instantly!—Oh, Julia, had I been so fortunate as to have called you mine entirely, before this mischance had fallen on me, I should not so deeply dread my banishment!

Jul. My soul is oppressed with sorrow at the nature of your misfortune: had these adverse circumstances arisen from a less fatal cause, I should have felt strong comfort in the thought, that I could now chase from your bosom every doubt of the warm sincerity of my love. My heart has long known no other guardian: I now entrust my person to your honour—we will fly together. When safe from pursuit, my father's will may

be fulfilled, and I receive a legal claim to be the partner of your sorrows, and tenderest comforter. Then on the bosom of your wedded Julia you may lull your keen regret to slumbering, while virtuous love, with a cherub's hand, shall smoothe the brow of upbraiding thought, and pluck the thorn from compunction.

Faulk. Oh, Julia! I am bankrupt in gratitude!—but the time is so pressing, it calls on you for so hasty a resolution.—Would you not wish some hours to weigh the advantages you forego, and what little compensation poor Faulkland can make you beside his solitary love?

Jul. I ask not a moment.—No, Faulkland, I have loved you for yourself: and if I now, more than ever, prize the solemn engagement which so long has pledged us to each other, it is because it leaves no room for hard aspersions on my fame, and puts the seal of duty to an act of love. But let us not linger. Perhaps this delay——

Faulk. 'Twill be better I should not venture out again till dark. Yet am I grieved to think what numberless distresses will press heavy on your gentle disposition!

Jul. Perhaps your fortune may be forfeited by this unhappy act. I know not whether 'tis so, but sure that alone can never make us unhappy. The little I have will be sufficient to support us; and exile never should be splendid.

Faulk. Ay, but in such an abject state of life, my wounded pride, perhaps, may increase the natural fretfulness of my temper, till I become a rude, morose companion, beyond your patience to endure. Perhaps the recollection of a deed my conscience cannot justify may haunt me in such gloomy and unsocial fits, that I shall hate the tenderness that would relieve me, break from your arms, and quarrel with your fondness?

Jul. If your thoughts should assume so unhappy a bent, you will the more want some mild and affectionate spirit to watch over and console you; one who, by bear-

ing your infirmities with gentleness and resignation, may teach you so to bear the evils of your fortune.

Faulk. Julia, I have proved you to the quick! and with this useless device, I throw away all my doubts. How shall I plead to be forgiven this last unworthy effect of my restless, unsatisfied disposition?

Jul. Has no such disaster happened as you related?

Faulk. I am ashamed to own that it was pretended; yet in pity, Julia, do not kill me with resenting a fault which can never be repeated: but sealing, this once, my pardon, let me to-morrow, in the face of heaven, receive my future guide and monitress, and expiate my past folly by years of tender adoration.

Jul. Hold, Faulkland! That you are free from a crime, which I before feared to name, Heaven knows how sincerely I rejoice! These are tears of thankfulness for that! But, that your cruel doubts should have urged you to an imposition that has wrung my heart, gives me now a pang more keen than I can express!

Faulk. By heavens! Julia——

Jul. Yet hear me.—My father loved you, Faulkland! and you preserved the life that tender parent gave me; in his presence I pledged my hand—joyfully pledged it, where before I had given my heart. When, soon after, I lost that parent, it seemed to me that Providence had, in Faulkland, shown me whither to transfer, without a pause, my grateful duty as well as my affection: hence I have been content to bear from you, what pride and delicacy would have forbid me from another. I will not upbraid you, by repeating how you have trifled with my sincerity——

Faulk. I confess it all! yet hear——

Jul. After such a year of trial, I might have flattered myself that I should not have been insulted with a new probation of my sincerity, as cruel as unnecessary! I now see it is not in your nature to be content or con-

fident in love. With this conviction, I never will be yours. While I had hopes that my persevering attention, and unreproaching kindness, might in time reform your temper, I should have been happy to have gained a dearer influence over you; but I will not furnish you with a licensed power to keep alive an incorrigible fault, at the expense of one who never would contend with you.

Faulk. Nay, but Julia, by my soul and honour, if, after this——

Jul. But one word more.—As my faith has once been given to you, I will never barter it with another. I shall pray for your happiness with the truest sincerity; and the dearest blessing I can ask of heaven to send you, will be to charm you from that unhappy temper which alone has prevented the performance of our solemn engagement. All I request of you is, that you will yourself reflect upon this infirmity, and, when you number up the many true delights it has deprived you of, let it not be your least regret, that it lost you the love of one who would have followed you in beggary through the world! [*Exit.*

Faulk. She's gone!—for ever!—There was an awful resolution in her manner, that rivetted me to my place. Oh, fool! dolt! barbarian! Cursed as I am, with more imperfections than my fellow-wretches, kind Fortune sent a heaven-gifted cherub to my aid, and, like a ruffian, I have driven her from my side! I must now haste to my appointment. Well, my mind is tuned for such a scene! I shall wish only to become a principal in it, and reverse the tale my cursed folly put me upon forging here. Oh, Love! tormentor! fiend! whose influence, like the moon's, acting on men of dull souls, makes idiots of them, but meeting subtler spirits, betrays their course, and urges sensibility to madness! [*Exit.*

Enter MAID *and* LYDIA.

Maid. My mistress, ma'am, I know, was here just now; perhaps she is only in the next room. [*Exit.*

Lyd. Heigh ho! Though he has used me so, this fellow runs strangely in my head. I believe one lecture from my grave cousin will make me recall him.

Enter JULIA.

Oh, Julia, I am come to you with such an appetite for consolation!—Lud, child! what's the matter with you? You have been crying!—I'll be hanged if that Faulkland has not been tormenting you!

Jul. You mistake the cause of my uneasiness!—Something has flurried me a little,—nothing that you can guess at. [*Aside.*] I would not accuse Faulkland to a sister!

Lyd. Ah! whatever vexations you may have, I can assure you mine surpass them. You know who Beverley proves to be?

Jul. I will now own to you, Lydia, that Mr. Faulkland had before informed me of the whole affair. Had young Absolute been the person you took him for, I should not have accepted your confidence on the subject, without a serious endeavor to counteract your caprice.

Lyd. So, then, I see, I have been deceived by every one; but I don't care, I'll never have him.

Jul. Nay, Lydia——

Lyd. Why, is it not provoking? when I thought we were coming to the prettiest distress imaginable, to find myself made a mere Smithfield bargain of at last?—There had I projected one of the most sentimental elopements! so becoming a disguise!—so amiable a ladder of ropes!—Conscious moon—four horses—Scotch parson—with such surprise to Mrs. Malaprop; and such

paragraphs in the newspapers!—Oh, I shall die with disappointment!

Jul. I don't wonder at it.

Lyd. Now—sad reverse!—what have I to expect, but after a deal of flimsy preparation, with a bishop's license and my aunt's blessing, to go simpering up to the altar! or, perhaps, be cried three times in a country church, and have an unmannerly fat clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish, to join John Absolute and Lydia Languish, spinster!—Oh, that I should live to hear myself called spinster!

Jul. Melancholy, indeed!

Lyd. How mortifying, to remember the dear, delicious shifts I used to be put to, to gain half a minute's conversation with this fellow! How often have I stole forth in the coldest night in January, and found him in the garden, stuck like a dripping statue!—There would he kneel to me in the snow, and sneeze and cough so pathetically!—he shivering with cold, and I with apprehension!—and, while the freezing blast numbed our joints, how warmly would he press me to pity his flame, and glow with mutual ardour!—Ah, Julia, that was something like being in love!

Jul. If I were in spirits, Lydia, I could chide you only by laughing heartily at you; but it suits more the situation of my mind, at present, earnestly to entreat you not to let a man who loves you with sincerity, suffer that unhappiness from your caprice which I know too well caprice can inflict.

[*Mrs. Malaprop speaks within.*

Lyd. Oh, lud! what has brought my aunt here!

Enter Mrs. Malaprop, Fag *and* David.

Mrs. M. So! so! here's fine work! here's fine suicide, parricide, and simulation, going on in the fields; and

Sir Anthony not to be found to prevent the antistrophe!

Jul. For heaven's sake, madam, what's the meaning of this?

Mrs. M. That gentleman can tell you,—'twas he enveloped the affair to me.

Lyd. Do, sir, will you inform us? [*To Fag.*

Fag. Ma'am, I should hold myself very deficient in every requisite that forms the man of breeding if I delayed a moment to give all the information in my power to a lady so deeply interested in the affair as you are.

Lyd. But quick! quick, sir!

Fag. True, ma'am, as you say, one should be quick in divulging matters of this nature; for should we be tedious, perhaps while we are flourishing on the subject two or three lives may be lost!

Lyd. Oh, patience!—Do, ma'am, for heaven's sake! tell us what is the matter!

Mrs. M. Why, murder's the matter! slaughter's the matter! killing's the matter! But he can tell you the perpendiculars.

Lyd. Then, prithee, sir, be brief.

Fag. Why, then, ma'am: as to murder—I cannot take upon me to say—and as to slaughter, or man-slaughter, that will be as the jury finds it.

Lyd. But who, sir—who are engaged in this?

Fag. 'Faith, ma'am, one is a young gentleman whom I should be very sorry anything was to happen to—a very pretty behaved gentleman! We have lived much together, and always on terms.

Lyd. But who is this? who? who? who?

Fag. My master, ma'am—my master—I speak of my master.

Lyd. Heavens! What, Captain Absolute?

Mrs. M. Oh, to be sure, you are frightened now!

Jul. But who are with him, sir?

Fag. As to the rest, ma'am, this gentleman can inform you better than I.

Jul. Do speak, my friend. [*To David.*

Dav. Look'ee, my lady—by the mass! there's mischief going on. Folks don't use to meet for amusement with firearms, firelocks, fire-engines, fire-screens, fire-office, and the devil knows what other crackers beside!—This, my lady, I say has an angry savour.

Jul. But who is there beside Captain Absolute, friend?

Dav. My poor master—under favour for mentioning him first. You know me, my lady—I am David—and my master, of course, is, or was, Squire Acres. Then comes Squire Faulkland.

Jul. Do, ma'am, let us instantly endeavour to prevent mischief.

Mrs. M. Oh, fy! it would be very inelegant in us:—we should only participate things.

Dav. Ah, do, Mrs. Aunt, save a few lives!—they are desperately given, believe me. Above all, there is that blood-thirsty Philistine, Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

Mrs. M. Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Oh, mercy! have they drawn poor little dear Sir Lucius into the scrape?—Why, how you stand, girl! you have no more feeling than one of the Derbyshire petrifactions!

Lyd. What are we to do, madam?

Mrs. M. Why, fly with the utmost felicity, to be sure, to prevent mischief!—Here, friend, you can show us the place?

Fag. If you please, ma'am, I will conduct you.—David, do you look for Sir Anthony. [*Exit David.*

Mrs. M. Come, girls, this gentleman will exhort us.—Come, sir, you're our envoy—lead the way, and we'll precede.

Fag. Not a step before the ladies for the world!

Mrs. M. You're sure you know the spot?

Fag. I think I can find it, ma'am: and one good thing

is, we shall hear the report of the pistols as we draw near, so we can't well miss them;—never fear, ma'am, never fear. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The South Parade.*

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, *putting his sword under his great-coat.*

Capt. A. A sword seen in the streets of Bath would raise as great an alarm as a mad dog.—How provoking this is in Faulkland!—never punctual! I shall be obliged to go without him at last.—Oh, the devil! here's Sir Anthony! how shall I escape him?

[*Muffles up his face, and takes a circle, to escape him.*

Enter SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.

Sir A. How one may be deceived at a little distance! Only that I see he don't know me, I could have sworn that was Jack!—Hey, Gad's life! it is.—Why, Jack, what are you afraid of, hey?—sure I'm right. Why, Jack, Jack Absolute! [*Goes up to him.*

Capt. A. Really, sir, you have the advantage of me:—I don't remember ever to have had the honour—my name is Saunderson, at your service.

Sir A. Sir, I beg your pardon—I took you—hey?—zounds! it is—Stay—[*Looks up to his face.*] So, so—your humble servant, Mr. Saunderson! Why, you scoundrel, what tricks are you after now?

Capt. A. Oh, a joke, sir, a joke! I came here on purpose to look for you, sir.

Sir A. You did! well, I am glad you were so lucky:—but what are you muffled up so for?—What's this for?—hey?

Capt. A. 'Tis cool, sir, isn't it?—rather chilly some-

how:—but I shall be late—I have a particular engagement.

Sir A. Stay!—Why, I thought you were looking for me?—Pray, Jack, where is't you are going?

Capt. A. Going, sir?

Sir A. Ay, where are you going?

Capt. A. Where am I going?

Sir A. You unmannerly puppy!

Capt. A. I was going, sir, to—to—to—to Lydia—sir, to Lydia—to make matters up if I could; and I was looking for you, sir, to—to——

Sir A. To go with you, I suppose. Well, come along.

Capt. A. Oh! zounds! no sir, not for the world!—I wished to meet with you, sir,—to—to—to—You find it cool, I'm sure, sir—you'd better not stay out.

Sir A. Cool!—not at all.—Well, Jack—and what will you say to Lydia?

Capt. A. Oh, sir, beg her pardon, humour her—promise and vow: but I detain you, sir—consider the cold air on your gout.

Sir A. Oh, not at all!—not at all! I'm in no hurry.—Ah! Jack, you youngsters, when once you are wounded here—[*Putting his hand to Capt. Absolute's breast.*] Hey! what the deuce have you got here?

Capt. A. Nothing, sir—nothing.

Sir A. What's this? here's something damned hard.

Capt. A. Oh, trinkets, sir! trinkets!—a bauble for Lydia.

Sir A. Nay, let me see your taste.—[*Pulls his coat open, the sword falls.*] Trinkets! a bauble for Lydia!—Zounds! sirrah, you are not going to cut her throat, are you?

Capt. A. Ha! ha! ha!—I thought it would divert you, sir, though I didn't mean to tell you till afterwards.

Sir A. You didn't?—Yes, this is a very diverting trinket, truly!

Capt. A. Sir, I'll explain to you.—You know, sir, Lydia is romantic, devilish romantic, and very absurd, of course; now, sir, I intend, if she refuses to forgive me, to unsheathe this sword, and swear—I'll fall upon its point, and expire at her feet!

Sir A. Fall upon a fiddlestick's end!—Why, I suppose it is the very thing that would please her.—Get along, you fool!

Capt. A. Well, sir, you shall hear of my success—you shall hear.—"Oh, Lydia!—forgive me, or this pointed steel"—says I.

Sir A. "Oh, booby! stay away and welcome,"—says she.—Get along! and damn your trinkets!

[*Exit Capt. A.*

Enter DAVID, *running.*

Dav. Stop him! stop him! Murder! Thief! Fire!—Stop fire! Stop fire!—Oh, Sir Anthony—call! call! bid 'em stop! Murder! Fire!

Sir A. Fire! Murder!—Where?

Dav. Oons! he's out of sight! and I'm out of breath for my part! Oh, Sir Anthony, why didn't you stop him? why didn't you stop him?

Sir A. Zounds! the fellow's mad!—Stop whom? stop Jack?

Dav. Ay, the captain, sir!—there's murder and slaughter——

Sir A. Murder!

Dav. Ay, please you, Sir Anthony, there's all kinds of murder, all sorts of slaughter to be seen in the fields: there's fighting going on, sir—bloody sword-and-gun fighting!

Sir A. Who are going to fight, dunce?

Dav. Everybody that I know of, Sir Anthony:—everybody is going to fight,—my poor master, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, your son, the captain——

Sir A. Oh, the dog! I see his tricks.—Do you know the place?

Dav. King's-Mead-Fields.

Sir A. You know the way?

Dav. Not an inch; but I'll call the mayor—aldermen — constables — church-wardens — and beadles—we can't be too many to part them.

Sir A. Come along—give me your shoulder! we'll get assistance as we go—the lying villain!—Well, I shall be in such a frenzy!—So—this was the history of his trinkets! I'll bauble him! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*King's-Mead-Fields.*

Enter SIR LUCIUS *and* ACRES, *with Pistols.*

Acres. By my valour, then, Sir Lucius, forty yards is a good distance. Odd levels and aims! I say it is a good distance.

Sir L. Is it for muskets, or small field-pieces? Upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, you must leave these things to me. Stay now, I'll show you. [*Measures paces along the Stage.*] There, now, that is a very pretty distance—a pretty gentlemen's distance.

Acres. Zounds! we might as well fight in a sentry-box! I tell you, Sir Lucius, the farther he is off the cooler I shall take my aim.

Sir L. Faith, then, I suppose you would aim at him best of all if he was out of sight!

Acres. No, Sir Lucius, but I should think forty, or eight and thirty yards——

Sir L. Pho! pho! nonsense! three or four feet between the mouths of your pistols is as good as a mile.

Acres. Odds bullets, no! by my valour! there is no merit in killing him so near! Do, my dear Sir Lucius,

Portrait of Joseph Jefferson as "Bob Acres"

let me bring him down at a long shot: a long shot, Sir Lucius, if you love me.

Sir L. Well, the gentleman's friend and I must settle that. But tell me, now, Mr. Acres, in case of an accident, is there any little will or commission I could execute for you?

Acres. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius, but I don't understand——

Sir L. Why, you may think there's no being shot at without a little risk—and if an unlucky bullet should carry a quietus with it—I say, it will be no time then to be bothering you about family matters.

Acres. A quietus!

Sir L. For instance, now, if that should be the case—would you choose to be pickled, and sent home?—or would it be the same to you to lie here in the Abbey?—I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey.

Acres. Pickled!—Snug lying in the Abbey!—Odds tremours! Sir Lucius, don't talk so!

Sir L. I suppose, Mr. Acres, you never were engaged in an affair of this kind before?

Acres. No, Sir Lucius, never before.

Sir L. Ah, that's a pity!—there's nothing like being used to a thing. Pray, now, how would you receive the gentleman's shot?

Acres. Odds files! I've practised that—there, Sir Lucius, there—[*Puts himself into an attitude*]—a side-front, hey?—Odd, I'll make myself small enough—I'll stand edgeways.

Sir L. Now, you're quite out—for if you stand so when I take my aim—— [*Levelling at him.*

Acres. Zounds, Sir Lucius! are you sure it is not cocked?

Sir L. Never fear.

Acres. But—but—you don't know—it may go off of its own head!

Sir L. Pho! be easy. Well, now, if I hit you in the body, my bullet has a double chance; for if it misses a vital part of your right side, 'twill be very hard if it don't succeed on the left.

Acres. A vital part!

Sir L. But, there—fix yourself so—[*Placing him*]—let him see the broadside of your full front—there—now a ball or two may pass clean through your body, and never do any harm at all.

Acres. Clean through me!—a ball or two clean through me!

Sir L. Ay, may they—and it is much the genteelest attitude into the bargain.

Acres. Look'ee, Sir Lucius—I'd just as lieve be shot in an awkward posture as a genteel one—so, by my valour! I will stand edgeways.

Sir L. [*Looking at his watch.*] Sure they don't mean to disappoint us—Ha! no, faith—I think I see them coming.

Acres. Hey!—what!—coming!

Sir L. Ay, who are those yonder, getting over the stile?

Acres. There are two of them indeed!—well, let them come—hey, Sir Lucius!—we—we—we—we—won't run.

Sir L. Run!

Acres. No, I say—we won't run, by my valour.

Sir L. What the devil's the matter with you?

Acres. Nothing—nothing—my dear friend—my dear Sir Lucius—but I—I—I don't feel quite so bold, somehow, as I did.

Sir L. Oh, fy! consider your honour.

Acres. Ay, true—my honour—do, Sir Lucius, edge in a word or two, every now and then, about my honour.

Sir L. Well, here they're coming. [*Looking.*

Acres. Sir Lucius—if I wa'n't with you, I should al-

most think I was afraid.—If my valour should leave me! Valour will come and go.

Sir L. Then, pray, keep it fast while you have it.

Acres. Sir Lucius—I doubt it is going—yes—my valour is certainly going!—it is sneaking off!—I feel it oozing out, as it were, at the palms of my hands!

Sir L. Your honour—your honour!—Here they are.

Acres. Oh, mercy!—now—that I was safe at Clod Hall! or could be shot before I was aware!

Enter FAULKLAND *and* CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Sir L. Gentlemen, your most obedient.—Ha!—what, Captain Absolute! So, I suppose, sir, you are come here, just like myself—to do a kind office, first for your friend—than to proceed to business on your own account.

Acres. What, Jack!—my dear Jack!—my dear friend!

Capt. A. Hark'ee, Bob, Beverley's at hand.

Sir L. Well, Mr. Acres—I don't blame your saluting the gentleman civilly. So, Mr. Beverley, [*To Faulkland,*] if you'll choose your weapons the captain and I will measure the ground.

Faulk. My weapons, sir!

Acres. Odds life! Sir Lucius, I'm not going to fight Mr. Faulkland; these are my particular friends!

Sir L. What, sir, did not you come here to fight Mr. Acres?

Faulk. Not I, upon my word, sir!

Sir L. Well, now, that's mighty provoking! But I hope, Mr. Faulkland, as there are three of us come on purpose for the game, you won't be so cantankerous as to spoil the party, by sitting out.

Capt. A. Oh, pray, Faulkland, fight to oblige Sir Lucius.

Faulk. Nay, if Mr. Acres is so bent on the matter——

Acres. No, no, Mr. Faulkland—I'll bear my disappointment like a Christian.—Look'ee, Sir Lucius, there's no occasion at all for me to fight; and if it is the same to you, I'd as lieve let it alone.

Sir L. Observe me, Mr. Acres—I must not be trifled with! You have certainly challenged somebody, and you came here to fight him. Now, if that gentleman is willing to represent him—I can't see, for my soul, why it isn't just the same thing.

Acres. Why, no, Sir Lucius: I tell you, 'tis one Beverley I've challenged—a fellow, you see, that dare not show his face! If he were here, I'd make him give up his pretensions directly!

Capt. A. Hold, Bob—let me set you right—there is no such man as Beverley in the case. The person who assumed that name is before you; and as his pretensions are the same in both characters, he is ready to support them in whatever way you please.

Sir L. Well, this is lucky. Now you have an opportunity——

Acres. What, quarrel with my dear friend, Jack Absolute?—not if he were fifty Beverleys! Zounds! Sir Lucius, you would not have me so unnatural!

Sir L. Upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, your valour has oozed away with a vengeance!

Acres. Not in the least! odds backs and abettors! I'll be your second with all my heart—and if you should get a quietus, you may command me entirely. I'll get you snug lying in the Abbey here; or pickle you, and send you over to Blunderbuss Hall, or anything of the kind, with the greatest pleasure.

Sir L. Pho! pho! you are little better than a coward.

Acres. Mind, gentlemen, he calls me a coward: coward was the word, by my valour!

Sir L. Well, sir?

Acres. Look'ee, Sir Lucius, 'tisn't that I mind the

word coward—coward may be said in a joke—But if you had called me a poltroon, odds daggers and balls!—

Sir L. Well, sir?

Acres. I should have thought you a very ill-bred man.

Sir L. Pho! you are beneath my notice.

Capt. A. Nay, Sir Lucius, you can't have a better second than my friend Acres. He is a most determined dog—called in the country, Fighting Bob. He generally kills a man a week—don't you, Bob?

Acres. Ay—at home!

Sir L. Well, then Captain, 'tis we must begin—so come out, my little counsellor—[*Draws his sword,*]—and ask the gentleman, whether he will resign the lady without forcing you to proceed against him.

Capt. A. Come on, then, sir—[*Draws*]; since you won't let it be an amicable suit, here's my reply.

Enter SIR ANTHONY, DAVID, *and the* LADIES.

Dav. Knock 'em all down, sweet Sir Anthony; knock down my master in particular; and bind his hands over to their good behaviour!

Sir A. Put up, Jack, put up, or I shall be in a frenzy—how came you in a duel, sir?

Capt. A. 'Faith, sir, that gentleman can tell you better than I; 'twas he called on me, and you know, sir, I serve his majesty.

Sir A. Here's a pretty fellow! I catch him going to cut a man's throat, and he tells me he serves his majesty! Zounds! sirrah, then how durst you draw the king's sword against one of his subjects?

Capt. A. Sir, I tell you, that gentleman called me out, without explaining his reasons.

Sir A. 'Gad, sir! how came you to call my son out, without explaining your reasons?

Sir L. Your son, sir, insulted me in a manner which my honour could not brook.

Sir A. Zounds, Jack! how durst you insult the gentleman in a manner which his honour could not brook?

Mrs. M. Come, come, let's have no honour before ladies—Captain Absolute, come here—How could you intimidate us so? Here's Lydia has been terrified to death for you.

Capt. A. For fear I should be killed, or escape, ma'am?

Mrs. M. Nay, no delusions to the past—Lydia is convinced; speak, child.

Sir L. With your leave, ma'am, I must put in a word here. I believe I could interpret the young lady's silence. Now mark——

Lyd. What is it you mean, sir?

Sir L. Come, come, Delia, we must be serious now—this is no time for trifling.

Lyd. 'Tis true, sir; and your reproof bids me offer this gentleman my hand, and solicit the return of his affections.

Capt. A. Oh, my little angel, say you so? Sir Lucius, I perceive there must be some mistake here, with regard to the affront which you affirm I have given you. I can only say that it could not have been intentional. And as you must be convinced, that I should not fear to support a real injury—you shall now see that I am not ashamed to atone for an inadvertency—I ask your pardon. But for this lady, while honoured with her approbation, I will support my claim against any man whatever.

Sir A. Well said, Jack, and I'll stand by you, my boy.

Acres. Mind, I give up all my claim—I make no pretensions to any thing in the world; and if I can't get a

wife without fighting for her, by my valour! I'll live a bachelor.

Sir L. Captain, give me your hand—an affront, handsomely acknowledged, becomes an obligation; and as for the lady, if she chooses to deny her own handwriting, here—— [*Takes out Letters.*

Mrs. M. Oh, he will dissolve my mystery! Sir Lucius, perhaps there's some mistake—perhaps I can illuminate——

Sir L. Pray, old gentlewoman, don't interfere where you have no business. Miss Languish, are you my Delia, or not?

Lyd. Indeed, Sir Lucius, I am not!

[*Lydia and Absolute walk aside.*

Mrs. M. Sir Lucius O'Trigger—ungrateful as you are—I own the soft impeachment—pardon my blushes, I am Delia.

Sir L. You Delia!—pho! pho! be easy!

Mrs. M. Why, thou barbarous vandyke—those letters are mine. When you are more sensible of my benignity perhaps I may be brought to encourage your addresses.

Sir L. Mrs. Malaprop, I am extremely sensible of your condescension; and whether you or Lucy have put this trick on me, I am equally beholden to you. And to show you I am not ungrateful, Captain Absolute, since you have taken that lady from me, I'll give you my Delia into the bargain.

Capt. A. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius; but here's my friend, fighting Bob, unprovided for.

Sir L. Ha! little Valour—here, will you make your fortune?

Acres. Odds wrinkles! No.—But give me your hand, Sir Lucius, forget and forgive; but if ever I give you a chance of pickling me again, say Bob Acres is a dunce, that's all.

Sir A. Come, Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down—you are in your bloom yet.

Mrs. M. Oh, Sir Anthony! men are all barbarians!

[*All retire but Julia and Faulkland.*

Jul. [*Aside.*] He seems dejected and unhappy—not sullen:—there was some foundation, however, for the tale he told me—Oh, woman! how true should be your judgment, when your resolution is so weak!

Faulk. Julia!—how can I sue for what I so little deserve? I dare not presume—yet hope is the child of penitence.

Jul. Oh! Faulkland, you have not been more faulty in your unkind treatment of me, than I am now in wanting inclination to resent it. As my heart honestly bids me place my weakness to the account of love, I should be ungenerous not to admit the same plea for yours.

Faulk. Now I shall be blest, indeed.

Sir A. [*Coming forward.*] What's going on here?—So, you have been quarreling, too, I warrant.—Come, Julia, I never interfered before; but let me have a hand in the matter at last.—All the faults I have ever seen in my friend Faulkland seemed to proceed from what he calls the delicacy and warmth of his affection for you.—There, marry him directly, Julia; you'll find he'll mend surprisingly.

[*The rest come forward.*

Sir L. Come, now, I hope there is no dissatisfied person but what is content; for as I have been disappointed myself, it will be very hard if I have not the satisfaction of seeing other people succeed better.

Acres. You are right, Sir Lucius—So, Jack, I wish you joy.—Mr. Faulkland, the same.—Ladies,—come now, to show you I'm neither vexed nor angry, odds tabors and pipes! I'll order the fiddles in half an hour to the New Rooms—and I insist on your all meeting me there.

Sir A. 'Gad, sir, I like your spirit! and at night we single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a good husband to Mrs. Malaprop.

Faulk. Our partners are stolen from us, Jack—I hope to be congratulated by each other—yours for having checked in time the errors of an ill-directed imagination which might have betrayed an innocent heart; and mine for having, by her gentleness and candour, reformed the unhappy temper of one, who by it made wretched whom he loved most, and tortured the heart he ought to have adored.

Capt A. True, Faulkland, we have both tasted the bitters, as well as the sweets of love; with this difference only, that you always prepared the bitter cup for yourself, while I——

Lyd. Was always obliged to me for it, hey? Mr. Modesty!—But come, no more of that—our happiness is now as unalloyed as general.

Jul. Then let us study to preserve it so; and while hope pictures to us a flattering scene of future bliss, let us deny its pencil those colours which are too bright to be lasting.—When hearts deserving happiness would unite their fortunes, Virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest, hurtless flowers; but ill-judging Passion will force the gaudier rose into the wreath, whose thorn offends them when its leaves are dropped! [*Exeunt omnes.*

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Sir Charles Marlow.....Mr. Gardner
Young Marlow (his Son).....Mr. Lewes
Hardcastle.....Mr. Shuter
Hastings.....Mr. Dubellamy
Tony Lumpkin.....Mr. Quick
Diggory.....Mr. Saunders

WOMEN.

Mrs. Hardcastle.....Mrs. Green
Miss Hardcastle.....Mrs. Bulkley
Miss Neville.....Mrs. Kniveton
Maid .....Miss Willems

Landlords, Servants, &c., &c.

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER

OR

THE MISTAKES OF A NIGHT

BY OLIVER GOLDSMITH

ACT I

SCENE.—*A Chamber in an old-fashioned House*

Enter MRS. HARDCASTLE *and* MR. HARDCASTLE

Mrs. Hard. I vow, Mr. Hardcastle, you're very particular. Is there a creature in the whole country, but ourselves, that does not take a trip to town now and then, to rub off the rust a little? There's the two Miss Hoggs, and our neighbor, Mrs. Grigsby, go to take a month's polishing every winter.

Hard. Ay, and bring back vanity and affectation to last them the whole year. I wonder why London cannot keep its own fools at home. In my time, the follies of the town crept slowly among us, but now they travel faster than a stage-coach. Its fopperies come down, not only as inside passengers, but in the very basket.

Mrs. Hard. Ay, *your* times were fine times, indeed; you have been telling us of *them* for many a long year. Here we live in an old rumbling mansion, that looks for

all the world like an inn, but that we never see company. Our best visitors are old Mrs. Oddfish, the curate's wife, and little Cripplegate, the lame dancing-master: And all our entertainment your old stories of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough. I hate such old-fashioned trumpery.

Hard. And I love it. I love everything that's old: old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine; and, I believe, Dorothy [*taking her hand*], you'll own I have been pretty fond of an old wife.

Mrs. Hard. Lord, Mr. Hardcastle, you're for ever at your Dorothys and your old wives. You may be a Darby, but I'll be no Joan, I promise you. I'm not so old as you'd make me, by more than one good year. Add twenty to twenty, and make money of that.

Hard. Let me see; twenty added to twenty, makes just fifty and seven!

Mrs. Hard. It's false, Mr. Hardcastle: I was but twenty when I was brought to bed of Tony, that I had by Mr. Lumpkin, my first husband; and he's not come to years of discretion yet.

Hard. Nor ever will, I dare answer for him. Ay, you have taught *him* finely!

Mrs. Hard. No matter, Tony Lumpkin has a good fortune. My son is not to live by his learning. I don't think a boy wants much learning to spend fifteen hundred a year.

Hard. Learning, quotha! A mere composition of tricks and mischief!

Mrs. Hard. Humour, my dear, nothing but humour. Come, Mr. Hardcastle, you must allow the boy a little humour.

Hard. I'd sooner allow him a horse-pond! If burning the footmen's shoes, frightening the maids, and worrying the kittens, be humor, he has it. It was but yesterday he fastened my wig to the back of my chair, and

when I went to make a bow, I popped my bald head in Mrs. Frizzle's face!

Mrs. Hard. And am I to blame? The poor boy was always too sickly to do any good. A school would be his death. When he comes to be a little stronger, who knows what a year or two's Latin may do for him?

Hard. Latin for him! A cat and fiddle! No, no, the ale-house and the stable are the only schools he'll ever go to!

Mrs. Hard. Well, we must not snub the poor boy now, for I believe we sha'n't have him long among us. Anybody that looks in his face may see he's consumptive.

Hard. Ay, if growing too fat be one of the symptoms.

Mrs. Hard. He coughs sometimes.

Hard. Yes, when his liquor goes the wrong way.

Mrs. Hard. I'm actually afraid of his lungs.

Hard. And truly, so am I; for he sometimes whoops like a speaking-trumpet—[*Tony hallooing behind the Scenes*]—O, there he goes—A very consumptive figure, truly!

Enter TONY, *crossing the stage.*

Mrs. Hard. Tony, where are going, my charmer? Won't you give papa and I a little of your company, lovey?

Tony. I'm in haste, mother; I cannot stay.

Mrs. Hard. You sha'n't venture out this raw evening, my dear. You look most shockingly.

Tony. I can't stay, I tell you. The Three Pigeons expects me down every moment. There's some fun going forward.

Hard. Ay; the ale-house, the old place: I thought so.

Mrs. Hard. A low, paltry set of fellows.

Tony. Not so low, either. There's Dick Muggins, the exciseman; Jack Slang, the horse doctor; Little

Aminadab, that grinds the music box, and Tom Twist, that spins the pewter platter.

Mrs. Hard. Pray, my dear, disappoint them for one night, at least.

Tony. As for disappointing *them*, I should not much mind; but I can't abide to disappoint *myself!*

Mrs. Hard. [*Detaining him.*] You sha'n't go.

Tony. I will, I tell you.

Mrs. Hard. I say you sha'n't.

Tony. We'll see which is strongest, you or I.

[*Exit hauling her out.*

HARDCASTLE, *solus.*

Hard. Ay, there goes a pair that only spoil each other. But is not the whole age in a combination to drive sense and discretion out of doors? There's my pretty darling Kate; the fashions of the times have almost infected her too. By living a year or two in town she is as fond of gauze and French frippery as the best of them.

Enter MISS HARDCASTLE.

Hard. Blessing on my pretty innocence! Dressed out as usual, my Kate! Goodness! What a quantity of superfluous silk hast thou got about thee, girl! I could never teach the fools of this age, that the indigent world could be clothed out of the trimmings of the vain.

Miss Hard. You know our agreement, sir. You allow me the morning to receive and pay visits, and to dress in my own manner; and in the evening I put on my housewife's dress, to please you.

Hard. Well, remember, I insist on the terms of our agreement; and, by-the-bye, I believe I shall have occasion to try your obedience this very evening.

Miss Hard. I protest, sir, I don't comprehend your meaning.

Hard. Then, to be plain with you, Kate, I expect the young gentleman I have chosen to be your husband from town this very day. I have his father's letter, in which he informs me his son is set out, and that he intends to follow himself shortly after.

Miss Hard. Indeed! I wish I had known something of this before. Bless me, how shall I behave? It's a thousand to one I shan't like him; our meeting will be so formal, and so like a thing of business, that I shall find no room for friendship or esteem.

Hard. Depend upon it, child, I'll never control your choice; but Mr. Marlow, whom I have pitched upon, is the son of my old friend, Sir Charles Marlow, of whom you have heard me talk so often. The young gentleman has been bred a scholar, and is designed for an employment in the service of his country. I am told he's a man of excellent understanding.

Miss Hard. Is he?

Hard. Very generous.

Miss Hard. I believe I shall like him.

Hard. Young and brave.

Miss Hard. I am sure I shall like him.

Hard. And very handsome.

Miss Hard. My dear papa, say no more [*kissing his hand*], he's mine; I'll have him!

Hard. And, to crown all, Kate, he's one of the most bashful and reserved young fellows in all the world.

Miss Hard. Eh! you have frozen me to death again. That word reserved has undone all the rest of his accomplishments. A reserved lover, it is said, always makes a suspicious husband.

Hard. On the contrary, modesty seldom resides in a breast that is not enriched with nobler virtues. It was the very feature in his character that first struck me.

Miss Hard. He must have more striking features to catch me, I promise you. However, if he be so young,

so handsome, and so everything, as you mention, I believe he'll do still. I think I'll have him.

Hard. Ay, Kate, but there is still an obstacle. It is more than an even wager, he may not have *you.*

Miss Hard. My dear papa, why will you mortify one so?—Well, if he refuses, instead of breaking my heart at his indifference, I'll only break my glass for its flattery. Set my cap to some newer fashion, and look out for some less difficult admirer.

Hard. Bravely resolved! In the meantime I'll go prepare the servants for his reception; as we seldom see company, they want as much training as a company of recruits the first day's muster. [*Exit.*

MISS HARDCASTLE, *sola.*

Miss Hard. Lud, this news of papa's puts me all in a flutter. Young, handsome; these he put last; but I put them foremost. Sensible, good-natur'd; I like all that. But then reserved, and sheepish, that's much against him. Yet can't he be cured of his timidity, by being taught to be proud of his wife? Yes, and can't I—but I vow I'm disposing of the husband before I have secured the lover!

Enter MISS NEVILLE.

Miss Hard. I'm glad you're come, Neville, my dear. Tell me, Constance, how do I look this evening? Is there anything whimsical about me? Is it one of my well-looking days, child? Am I in face to-day?

Miss Neville. Perfectly, my dear. Yet, now I look again—bless me!—sure no accident has happened among the canary birds or the goldfishes? Has your brother or the cat been meddling? Or has the last novel been too moving?

Miss Hard. No; nothing of all this. I have been

threatened—I can scarce get it out—I have been threatened with a lover!

Miss Neville. And his name——

Miss Hard. Is Marlow.

Miss Neville. Indeed!

Miss Hard. The son of Sir Charles Marlow.

Miss Neville. As I live, the most intimate friend of Mr. Hastings, *my* admirer. They are never asunder. I believe you must have seen him when we lived in town.

Miss Hard. Never.

Miss Neville. He's a very singular character, I assure you. Among women of reputation and virtue he is the modestest man alive; but his acquaintance give him a very different character among creatures of another stamp: you understand me?

Miss Hard. An odd character, indeed! I shall never be able to manage him. What shall I do? Pshaw, think no more of him, but trust to occurrences for success. But how goes on your own affair, my dear? Has my mother been courting you for my brother Tony, as usual?

Miss Neville. I have just come from one of our agreeable *tête-a-têtes.* She has been saying a hundred tender things, and setting off her pretty monster as the very pink of perfection.

Miss Hard. And her partiality is such, that she actually thinks him so. A fortune like yours is no small temptation. Besides, as she has the sole management of it, I'm not surprised to see her unwilling to let it go out of the family.

Miss Neville. A fortune like mine, which chiefly consists in jewels, is no such mighty temptation. But, at any rate, if my dear Hastings be but constant, I make no doubt to be too hard for her at last. However, I let her suppose that I am in love with her son, and she

never once dreams that my affections are fixed upon another.

Miss Hard. My good brother holds out stoutly. I could almost love him for hating you so.

Miss Neville. It is a good-natur'd creature at bottom, and I'm sure would wish to see me married to anybody but himself. But my aunt's bell rings for our afternoon's walk through the improvements. *Allons.* Courage is necessary, as our affairs are critical.

Miss Hard. Would it were bed-time and all were well. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE.—*An Alehouse Room.*

Several shabby fellows, with punch and tobacco. TONY *at the head of the table, a little higher than the rest; a mallet in his hand.*

Omnes. Hurrea, hurrea, hurrea, bravo!

First Fellow. Now, gentlemen, silence for a song. The 'Squire is going to knock himself down for a song.

Omnes. Ay, a song, a song.

Tony. Then I'll sing you, gentlemen, a song I made upon this ale-house, the Three Pigeons.

SONG.

Let schoolmasters puzzle their brain,
With grammar, and nonsense, and learning;
Good liquor, I stoutly maintain,
Gives *genus* a better discerning,
Let them brag of their Heathenish Gods,
Their Lethes, their Styxes, and Stygians;
Their Quis, and their Quæs, and their Quods,
They're all but a parcel of pigeons.
Toroddle, toroddle, toroll!

When Methodist preachers come down,
A-preaching that drinking is sinful,
I'll wager the rascals a crown,
They always preach best with a skinful.
But when you come down with your pence,
For a slice of their scurvy religion,
I'll leave it to all men of sense,
That you, my good friend, are the pigeon.
Toroddle, toroddle, toroll!

Then come, put the jorum about,
And let us be merry and clever,
Our hearts and our liquors are stout,
Here's the Three Jolly Pigeons for ever.
Let some cry up woodcock or hare,
Your bustards, your ducks, and your widgeons,
But of all the birds in the air,
Here's a health to the Three Jolly Pigeons.
Toroddle, toroddle, toroll!

Omnes. Bravo, bravo!

First Fellow. The 'Squire has got spunk in him.

Second Fellow. I loves to hear him sing, bekeays he never gives us nothing that's *low.*

Third Fellow. O damn anything that's *low,* I cannot bear it!

Fourth Fellow. The genteel thing is the genteel thing at any time. If so be that a gentleman bees in a concatenation accordingly.

Third Fellow. I like the maxum of it, Master Muggins. What, though I am obligated to dance a bear, a man may be a gentleman for all that. May this be my poison if my bear ever dances but to the very genteelest of tunes. Water Parted, or the minuet in Ariadne.

Second Fellow. What a pity it is the 'Squire is not come to his own. It would be well for all the publicans within ten miles round of him.

Tony. Ecod, and so it would, Master Slang. I'd then show what it was to keep choice of company.

Second Fellow. O, he takes after his own father for that. To be sure, old 'Squire Lumpkin was the finest gentleman I ever set my eyes on. For winding the straight horn, or beating a thicket for a hare, or a wench, he never had his fellow. It was a saying in the place, that he kept the best horses, dogs, and girls in the whole county.

Tony. Ecod, and when I'm of age I'll be no bastard, I promise you. I have been thinking of Bet Bouncer and the miller's grey mare to begin with. But come, my boys, drink about and be merry, for you pay no reckoning. Well, Stingo, what's the matter?

Enter LANDLORD.

Landlord. There be two gentlemen in a postchaise at the door. They have lost their way upo' the forest; and they are talking something about Mr. Hardcastle.

Tony. As sure as can be, one of them must be the gentleman that's coming down to court my sister. Do they seem to be Londoners?

Landlord. I believe they may. They look woundily like Frenchmen.

Tony. Then desire them to step this way, and I'll set them right in a twinkling. [*Exit Landlord.*] Gentlemen, as they mayn't be good enough company for you, step down for a moment, and I'll be with you in the squeezing of a lemon. [*Exeunt Mob.*

TONY, *solus.*

Tony. Father-in-law has been calling me whelp, and hound, this half year. Now, if I pleased, I could be so revenged upon the old grumbletonian. But then I'm

afraid—afraid of what? I shall soon be worth fifteen hundred a year, and let him frighten me out of *that* if he can!

Enter LANDLORD, *conducting* MARLOW *and* HASTINGS,

Marlow. What a tedious, uncomfortable day have we had of it. We were told it was but forty miles across the country, and we have come above threescore.

Hastings. And all, Marlow, from that unaccountable reserve of yours, that would not let us enquire more frequently on the way.

Marlow. I own, Hastings, I am unwilling to lay myself under an obligation to every one I meet; and often stand the chance of an unmannerly answer.

Hastings. At present, however, we are not likely to receive any answer.

Tony. No offence, gentlemen. But I'm told you have been enquiring for one Mr. Hardcastle, in these parts. Do you know what part of the country you are in?

Hastings. Not in the least, sir, but should thank you for information.

Tony. Nor the way you came?

Hastings. No, sir, but if you can inform us——

Tony. Why, gentlemen, if you know neither the road you are going, nor where you are, nor the road you came, the first thing I have to inform you is, that—you have lost your way.

Marlow. We wanted no ghost to tell us that.

Tony. Pray, gentlemen, may I be so bold as to ask the place from whence you came?

Marlow. That's not necessary towards directing us where we are to go.

Tony. No offence; but question for question is all fair, you know. Pray, gentlemen, is not this same

Hardcastle a cross-grained, old-fashioned, whimsical fellow with an ugly face; a daughter, and a pretty son?

Hastings. We have not seen the gentleman, but he has the family you mention.

Tony. The daughter, a tall, trapesing trolloping, talkative maypole—The son a pretty, well-bred, agreeable youth, that everybody is fond of!

Marlow. Our information differs in this. The daughter is said to be well-bred and beautiful; the son, an awkward booby, reared up and spoiled at his mother's apron-string.

Tony. He-he-hem—then gentlemen, all I have to tell you is, that you won't reach Mr. Hardcastle's house this night, I believe.

Hastings. Unfortunate!

Tony. It's a damned long, dark, boggy, dirty, dangerous way. Stingo, tell the gentlemen the way to Mr. Hardcastle's. [*Winking upon the Landlord.*] Mr. Hardcastle's of Quagmire Marsh, you understand me.

Landlord. Master Hardcastle's! Lack-a-daisy, my masters, you're come a deadly deal wrong! When you came to the bottom of the hill, you should have crossed down Squash Lane.

Marlow. Cross down Squash Lane!

Landlord. Then you were to keep straight forward, until you came to four roads.

Marlow. Come to where four roads meet!

Tony. Ay, but you must be sure to take only one of them.

Marlow. O, sir, you're facetious!

Tony. Then, keeping to the right, you are to go sideways till you come upon Crack-skull common; there you must look sharp for the track of the wheel, and go forward, till you come to farmer Murrain's barn. Coming to the farmer's barn, you are to turn to

the right, and then to the left, and then to the right about again, till you find out the old mill——

Marlow. Zounds, man! we could as soon find out the longitude!

Hastings. What's to be done, Marlow?

Marlow. This house promises but a poor reception, though, perhaps, the landlord can accommodate us.

Landlord. Alack, master, we have but one spare bed in the whole house.

Tony. And to my knowledge, that's taken up by three lodgers already. [*After a pause, in which the rest seem disconcerted.*] I have hit it. Don't you think, Stingo, our landlady could accommodate the gentlemen by the fireside, with—three chairs and a bolster?

Hastings. I hate sleeping by the fireside.

Marlow. And I detest your three chairs and a bolster.

Tony. You do, do you?—then let me see—what—if you go on a mile further, to the Buck's Head; the old Buck's Head on the hill, one of the best inns in the whole county?

Hastings. Oh, oh! so we have escaped an adventure for this night, however.

Landlord [*apart to Tony*]. Sure, you ben't sending them to your father's as an inn, be you?

Tony. Mum, you fool, you. Let *them* find that out. [*To them.*] You have only to keep on straight forward, till you come to a large old house by the roadside. You'll see a pair of large horns over the door. That's the sign. Drive up the yard and call stoutly about you.

Hastings. Sir, we are obliged to you. The servants can't miss the way?

Tony. No, no: But I tell you, though, the landlord is rich, and going to leave off business; so he wants to be thought a gentleman, saving your presence, he! he! he! He'll be for giving you his company, and, ecod, if

you mind him, he'll persuade you that his mother was an alderman, and his aunt a justice of the peace!

Landlord. A troublesome old blade, to be sure; but 'a keeps as good wines and beds as any in the whole country.

Marlow. Well, if he supplies us with these, we shall want no further connection. We are to turn to the right, did you say?

Tony. No, no; straight forward. I'll just step myself, and show you a piece of the way. [*To the Landlord.*] Mum.

Landlord. Ah, bless your heart, for a sweet, pleasant —damned mischievous son of a whore. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II

SCENE.—*An old-fashioned House*

Enter HARDCASTLE, *followed by three or four awkward Servants*

Hardcastle. Well, I hope you're perfect in the table exercise I have been teaching you these three days. You all know your posts and your places, and can show that you have been used to good company, without ever stirring from home.

Omnes. Ay, ay.

Hard. When company comes, you are not to pop out and stare, and then run in again, like frightened rabbits in a warren.

Omnes. No, no.

Hard. You, Diggory, whom I have taken from the barn, are to make a show at the side-table; and you, Roger, whom I have advanced from the plough, are to place yourself behind *my* chair. But you're not to stand so, with your hands in your pockets. Take your hands from your pockets, Roger; and from your head, you blockhead, you. See how Diggory carries his hands. They're a little too stiff, indeed, but that's no great matter.

Diggory. Ay, mind how I hold them. I learned to hold my hands this way when I was upon drill for the militia. And so being upon drill—

Hard. You must not be so talkative, Diggory. You must be all attention to the guests. You must hear us talk, and not think of talking; you must see us drink,

and not think of drinking; you must see us eat, and not think of eating.

Diggory. By the laws, your worship, that's parfectly unpossible. Whenever Diggory sees yeating going forward, ecod, he's always wishing for a mouthful himself.

Hard. Blockhead! Is not a bellyful in the kitchen as good as a bellyful in the parlour? Stay your stomach with that reflection.

Diggory. Ecod, I thank your worship, I'll make a shift to stay my stomach with a slice of cold beef in the pantry.

Hard. Diggory, you are too talkative. Then, if I happen to say a good thing, or tell a good story at table, you must not all burst out a-laughing, as if you made part of the company.

Diggory. Then, ecod, your worship must not tell the story of Ould Grouse in the gun-room: I can't help laughing at that—he! he! he!—for the soul of me! We have laughed at that these twenty years—ha! ha! ha!

Hard. Ha! ha! ha! The story is a good one. Well, honest Diggory, you may laugh at that—but still remember to be attentive. Suppose one of the company should call for a glass of wine, how will you behave? A glass of wine, sir, if you please [*to Diggory*]—Eh, why don't you move?

Diggory. Ecod, your worship, I never have courage till I see the eatables and drinkables brought upo' the table, and then I'm as bauld as a lion.

Hard. What, will nobody move?

First Servant. I'm not to leave this pleace.

Third Servant. Nor mine, for sartain.

Diggory. Wauns, and I'm sure it canna be mine.

Hard. You numbskulls! and so while, like your betters, you are quarrelling for places, the guests must be starved. O, you dunces! I find I must begin all over again.—But don't I hear a coach drive into the yard?

To your posts, you blockheads! I'll go in the meantime and give my old friend's son a hearty reception at the gate. [*Exit Hardcastle.*

Diggory. By the elevens, my pleace is gone quite out of my head.

Roger. I know that my pleace is to be everywhere!

First Servant. Where the devil is mine?

Second Servant. My pleace is to be nowhere at all; and so I'ze go about my business!

[*Exeunt Servants, running about as if frighted, different ways.*

Enter SERVANT *with Candles, showing in* MARLOW *and* HASTINGS.

Servant. Welcome, gentlemen, very welcome. This way.

Hastings. After the disappointments of the day, welcome once more, Charles, to the comforts of a clean room and a good fire. Upon my word, a very well-looking house; antique but creditable.

Marlow. The usual fate of a large mansion. Having first ruined the master by good housekeeping, it at last comes to levy contributions as an inn.

Hastings. As you say, we passengers are to be taxed to pay all these fineries. I have often seen a good sideboard, or a marble chimney-piece, though not actually put in the bill, inflame a reckoning confoundedly.

Marlow. Travellers, George, must pay in all places. The only difference is, that in good inns, you pay dearly for luxuries; in bad inns, you are fleeced and starved.

Hastings. You have lived pretty much among them. In truth, I have been often surprised that you, who have seen so much of the world, with your natural good sense, and your many opportunities, could never yet acquire a requisite share of assurance.

Marlow. The Englishman's malady. But tell me,

George, where could I have learned that assurance you talk of? My life has been chiefly spent in a college, or an inn, in seclusion from that lovely part of the creation that chiefly teaches men confidence. I don't know that I was ever familiarly acquainted with a single modest woman—except my mother—But among females of another class, you know——

Hastings. Ay, among them you are impudent enough of all conscience!

Marlow. They are of *us,* you know.

Hastings. But in the company of women of reputation I never saw such an idiot, such a trembler; you look for all the world as if you wanted an opportunity of stealing out of the room.

Marlow. Why, man, that's because I *do* want to steal out of the room. Faith, I have often formed a resolution to break the ice, and rattle away at any rate. But I don't know how, a single glance from a pair of fine eyes has totally overset my resolution. An impudent fellow may counterfeit modesty, but I'll be hanged if a modest man can ever counterfeit impudence.

Hastings. If you could but say half the fine things to them that I have heard you lavish upon the barmaid of an inn, or even a college bedmaker——

Marlow. Why, George, I can't say fine things to them. They freeze, they petrify me. They may talk of a comet, or a burning mountain, or some such bagatelle. But to me, a modest woman, dressed out in all her finery, is the most tremendous object of the whole creation.

Hastings. Ha! ha! ha! At this rate, man, how can you ever expect to marry!

Marlow. Never, unless, as among kings and princes, my bride were to be courted by proxy. If, indeed, like an Eastern bridegroom, one were to be introduced to a wife he never saw before, it might be endured. But to

go through all the terrors of a formal courtship, together with the episode of aunts, grandmothers and cousins, and at last to blurt out the broad, staring question of *Madam, will you marry me?* No, no, that's a strain much above me, I assure you!

Hastings. I pity you. But how do you intend behaving to the lady you are come down to visit at the request of your father?

Marlow. As I behave to all other ladies. Bow very low. Answer yes, or no, to all her demands—But for the rest, I don't think I shall venture to look in her face till I see my father's again.

Hastings. I'm surprised that one who is so warm a friend can be so cool a lover.

Marlow. To be explicit, my dear Hastings, my chief inducement down was to be instrumental in forwarding your happiness, not my own. Miss Neville loves you, the family don't know you, as my friend you are sure of a reception, and let honour do the rest.

Hastings. My dear Marlow! But I'll suppress the emotion. Were I a wretch, meanly seeking to carry off a fortune, you should be the last man in the world I would apply to for assistance. But Miss Neville's person is all I ask, and that is mine, both from her deceased father's consent, and her own inclinations.

Marlow. Happy man! You have talents and art to captivate any woman. I'm doomed to adore the sex, and yet to converse with the only part of it I despise. This stammer in my address, and this awkward prepossessing visage of mine, can never permit me to soar above the reach of a milliner's apprentice, or one of the duchesses of Drury-lane. Pshaw! this fellow here to interrupt us.

Enter HARDCASTLE.

Hard. Gentlemen, once more you are heartily wel-

come. Which is Mr. Marlow? Sir, you're heartily welcome. It's not my way, you see, to receive my friends with my back to the fire. I like to give them a hearty reception in the old style at my gate. I like to see their horses and trunks taken care of.

Marlow [*aside*]. He has got our names from the servants already. [*To him.*] We approve your caution and hospitality, sir. [*To Hastings.*] I have been thinking, George, of changing our travelling dresses in the morning. I am grown confoundedly ashamed of mine.

Hard. I beg, Mr. Marlow, you'll use no ceremony in this house.

Hastings. I fancy, George, you're right: the first blow is half the battle. I intend opening the campaign with the white and gold.

Hard. Mr. Marlow—Mr. Hastings—gentlemen—pray be under no constraint in this house. This is Liberty Hall, gentlemen. You may do just as you please here.

Marlow. Yet, George, if we open the campaign too fiercely at first, we may want ammunition before it is over. I think to reserve the embroidery to secure a retreat.

Hard. Your talking of a retreat, Mr. Marlow, puts me in mind of the Duke of Marlborough, when we went to besiege Denain. He first summoned the garrison——

Marlow. Don't you think the *ventre d'or* waistcoat will do with the plain brown?

Hard. He first summoned the garrison, which might consist of about five thousand men——

Hastings. I think not: brown and yellow mix but very poorly.

Hard. I say, gentlemen, as I was telling you, he summoned the garrison, which might consist of about five thousand men——

Marlow. The girls like finery.

Hard. Which might consist of about five thousand

men, well appointed with stores, ammunition, and other implements of war. "Now," says the Duke of Marlborough to George Brooks, that stood next to him—you must have heard of George Brooks; "I'll pawn my Dukedom," say he, "but I take that garrison without spilling a drop of blood!" So——

Marlow. What, my good friend, if you gave us a glass of punch in the meantime, it would help us to carry on the siege with vigour.

Hard. Punch, sir!—[*Aside.*] This is the most unaccountable kind of modesty I ever met with!

Marlow. Yes, sir, punch! A glass of warm punch, after our journey, will be comfortable. This is Liberty Hall, you know.

Hard. Here's a cup, sir.

Marlow. [*Aside.*] So this fellow, in his Liberty Hall, will only let us have just what he pleases.

Hard. [*Taking the cup*]. I hope you'll find it to your mind. I have prepared it with my own hands, and I believe you'll own the ingredients are tolerable. Will you be so good as to pledge me, sir? Here, Mr. Marlow, here is to our better acquaintance! [*Drinks.*

Marlow. [*Aside.*] A very impudent fellow this! but he's a character, and I'll humour him a little. Sir, my service to you. [*Drinks.*

Hastings. [*Aside.*] I see this fellow wants to give us his company, and forgets that he's an innkeeper, before he has learned to be a gentleman.

Marlow. From the excellence of your cup, my old friend, I suppose you have a good deal of business in this part of the country. Warm work, now and then, at elections, I suppose?

Hard. No, sir, I have long given that work over. Since our betters have hit upon the expedient of electing each other, there's no business *for us that sell ale.*

Hastings. So, then, you have no turn for politics, I find.

Hard. Not in the least. There was a time, indeed, I fretted myself about the mistakes of government, like other people; but, finding myself every day growing more angry, and the government growing no better, I left it to mend itself. Since that I no more trouble my head about *Heyder Ally,* or *Ally Cawn,* than about *Ally Croaker.* Sir, my service to you.

Hastings. So that, with eating above stairs, and drinking below, with receiving your friends within, and amusing them without, you lead a good, pleasant, bustling life of it.

Hard. I do stir about a great deal, that's certain. Half the differences of the parish are adjusted in this very parlour.

Marlow [*After drinking*]. And you have an argument in your cup, old gentleman, better than any in Westminster Hall.

Hard. Ay, young gentleman, that, and a little philosophy.

Marlow. [*Aside.*] Well, this is the first time I ever heard of an innkeeper's philosophy.

Hastings. So then, like an experienced general, you attack them on every quarter. If you find their reason manageable, you attack it with your philosophy; if you find they have no reason, you attack them with this. Here's your health, my philosopher. [*Drinks.*

Hard. Good, very good, thank you; ha! ha! Your generalship puts me in mind of Prince Eugene, when he fought the Turks at the battle of Belgrade. You shall hear.

Marlow. Instead of the battle of Belgrade, I believe it's almost time to talk about supper. What has your philosophy got in the house for supper?

Hard. For supper, sir!—[*Aside.*] Was ever such a request to a man in his own house!

Marlow. Yes, sir, supper, sir; I begin to feel an appetite. I shall make devilish work to-night in the larder, I promise you.

Hard. [*Aside.*] Such a brazen dog sure never my eyes beheld. [*To him.*] Why, really, sir, as for supper I can't well tell. My Dorothy, and the cook maid, settle these things between them. I leave these kind of things entirely to them.

Marlow. You do, do you?

Hard. Entirely. By-the-bye, I believe they are in actual consultation upon what's for supper this moment in the kitchen.

Marlow. Then I beg they'll admit me as one of their privy council. It's a way I have got. When I travel, I always choose to regulate my own supper. Let the cook be called. No offence, I hope, sir.

Hard. O, no, sir, none in the least; yet, I don't know how: our Bridget, the cook maid, is not very communicative upon these occasions. Should we send for her she might scold us all out of the house.

Hastings. Let's see your list of the larder, then. I ask it as a favour. I always match my appetite to my bill of fare.

Marlow [*To Hardcastle, who looks at them with surprise*]. Sir, he's very right, and it's my way, too.

Hard. Sir, you have a right to command here. Here, Roger, bring us the bill of fare for to-night's supper. I believe it's drawn out. Your manner, Mr. Hastings, puts me in mind of my uncle, Colonel Wallop. It was a saying of his, that no man was sure of his supper till he had eaten it.

Hastings. [*Aside.*] All upon the high ropes! His uncle a colonel! We shall soon hear of his mother being a justice of peace. But let's hear the bill of fare.

Marlow [*Perusing*]. What's here? For the first course; for the second course; for the dessert. The devil, sir, do you think we have brought down the whole Joiners' Company, or the Corporation of Bedford, to eat up such a supper? Two or three little things, clean and comfortable, will do.

Hastings. But let's hear it.

Marlow [*Reading*]. For the first course at the top, a pig, and pruin sauce.

Hastings. Damn your pig, I say!

Marlow. And damn your pruin sauce, say I!

Hard. And yet, gentlemen, to men that are hungry, pig, with pruin sauce, is very good eating.

Marlow. At the bottom, a calf's tongue and brains.

Hastings. Let your brains be knocked out, my good sir; I don't like them.

Marlow. Or you may clap them on a plate by themselves, I do.

Hard. [*Aside.*] Their impudence confounds me. [*To them.*] Gentlemen, you are my guests; make what alterations you please. Is there anything else you wish to retrench or alter, gentlemen?

Marlow. Item. A pork pie, a boiled rabbit and sausages, a florentine, a shaking pudding, and a dish of tiff—taff—taffety cream!

Hastings. Confound your made dishes, I shall be as much at a loss in this house as at a green and yellow dinner at a French ambassador's table; I'm for plain eating.

Hard. I'm sorry, gentlemen, that I have nothing you like, but if there be anything you have a particular fancy to——

Marlow. Why, really, sir, your bill of fare is so exquisite that any one part of it is full as good as another. Send us what you please. So much for supper. And

now to see that our beds are aired and properly taken care of.

Hard. I entreat you'll leave all that to me. You shall not stir a step.

Marlow. Leave that to you! I protest, sir, you must excuse me, I always look to these things myself.

Hard. I must insist, sir, you'll make yourself easy on that head.

Marlow. You see I'm resolved on it.—[*Aside.*] A very troublesome fellow this, as ever I met with.

Hard. Well, sir, I'm resolved at least to attend you.—[*Aside.*] This may be modern modesty, but I never saw anything look so like old-fashioned impudence.

[*Exeunt Marlow and Hardcastle.*

HASTINGS, *solus.*

Hastings. So I find this fellow's civilities begin to grow troublesome. But who can be angry at those assiduities which are meant to please him? Ha! what do I see! Miss Neville, by all that's happy!

Enter MISS NEVILLE.

Miss Neville. My dear Hastings! To what unexpected good fortune? to what accident am I to ascribe this happy meeting?

Hastings. Rather let me ask the same question, as I could never have hoped to meet my dearest Constance at an inn.

Miss Neville. An inn! sure you mistake! My aunt, my guardian, lives here. What could induce you to think this house an inn?

Hastings. My friend, Mr. Marlow, with whom I came down, and I, have been sent here as to an inn, I assure you. A young fellow whom we accidentally met at a house hard by directed us hither.

Miss Neville. Certainly it must be one of my hopeful

cousin's tricks, of whom you have heard me talk so often, ha! ha! ha! ha!

Hastings. He whom your aunt intends for you? He of whom I have such just apprehensions?

Miss Neville. You have nothing to fear from him, I assure you. You'd adore him if you knew how heartily he despises me. My aunt knows it, too, and has undertaken to court me for him, and actually begins to think she has made a conquest.

Hastings. Thou dear dissembler! You must know, my Constance, I have just seized this happy opportunity of my friend's visit here to get admittance into the family. The horses that carried us down are now fatigued with their journey, but they'll soon be refreshed; and then, if my dearest girl will trust in her faithful Hastings, we shall soon be landed in France, where even among slaves the laws of marriage are respected.

Miss Neville. I have often told you, that though ready to obey you, I yet should leave my little fortune behind with reluctance. The greatest part of it was left me by my uncle, the India Director, and chiefly consists in jewels. I have been for some time persuading my aunt to let me wear them. I fancy I'm very near succeeding. The instant they are put into my possession you shall find me ready to make them and myself yours.

Hastings. Perish the baubles! Your person is all I desire. In the meantime, my friend Marlow must not be let into his mistake. I know the strange reserve of his temper is such, that if abruptly informed of it, he would instantly quit the house before our plan was ripe for execution.

Miss Neville. But how shall we keep him in the deception? Miss Hardcastle is just returned from walking; what if we still continue to deceive him?—This, this way—— [*They confer.*

Enter MARLOW.

Marlow. The assiduities of these good people tease me beyond hearing. My host seems to think it ill manners to leave me alone, and so he claps not only himself, but his old-fashioned wife on my back. They talk of coming to sup with us, too; and then, I suppose, we are to run the gauntlet through all the rest of the family.—What have we got here?——

Hastings. My dear Charles! Let me congratulate you!—The most fortunate accident!—Who do you think is just alighted?

Marlow. Cannot guess.

Hastings. Our mistresses, boy, Miss Hardcastle and Miss Neville. Give me leave to introduce Miss Constance Neville to your acquaintance. Happening to dine in the neighborhood, they called, on their return, to take fresh horses here. Miss Hardcastle has just stept into the next room, and will be back in an instant. Wasn't it lucky? eh!

Marlow [*aside*]. I have just been mortified enough of all conscience, and here comes something to complete my embarrassment.

Hastings. Well! but wasn't it the most fortunate thing in the world?

Marlow. Oh! yes. Very fortunate—a most joyful encounter——But our dresses, George, you know, are in disorder——What if we should postpone the happiness till to-morrow?——To-morrow at her own house——It will be every bit as convenient——And rather more respectful——To-morrow let it be. [*Offering to go.*

Miss Neville. By no means, sir. Your ceremony will displease her. The disorder of your dress will shew the ardour of your impatience. Besides, she knows you are in the house, and will permit you to see her.

Marlow. Oh! the devil! how shall I support it? Hem! hem! Hastings, you must not go. You are to assist me, you know. I shall be confoundedly ridiculous. Yet, hang it! I'll take courage. Hem!

Hastings. Pshaw, man! it's but the first plunge, and all's over. She's but a woman, you know.

Marlow. And of all women, she that I dread most to encounter!

Enter Miss Hardcastle, *as returned from walking, a Bonnet, &c.*

Hastings [*Introducing them*]. Miss Hardcastle, Mr. Marlow, I'm proud of bringing two persons of such merit together, that only want to know to esteem each other.

Miss Hard. [*Aside.*] Now, for meeting my modest gentleman with a demure face, and quite in his own manner. [*After a pause, in which he appears very uneasy and disconcerted.*] I'm glad of your safe arrival, sir——I'm told you had some accidents by the way.

Marlow. Only a few, madam. Yes, we had some. Yes, madam, a good many accidents, but should be sorry—madam—or rather glad of any accidents—that are so agreeably concluded. Hem!

Hastings [*To him*]. You never spoke better in your whole life. Keep it up, and I'll insure you the victory.

Miss Hard. I'm afraid you flatter, sir. You that have seen so much of the finest company can find little entertainment in an obscure corner of the country.

Marlow [*Gathering courage*]. I have lived, indeed, in the world, madam; but I have kept very little company. I have been but an observer upon life, madam, while others were enjoying it.

Miss Neville. But that, I am told, is the way to enjoy it at last.

Hastings [*To him*]. Cicero never spoke better. Once more, and you are confirmed in assurance for ever.

Marlow [*To him*]. Hem! Stand by me, then, and when I'm down, throw in a word or two to set me up again.

Miss Hard. An observer, like you, upon life, were, I fear, disagreeably employed, since you must have had much more to censure than to approve.

Marlow. Pardon me, madam. I was always willing to be amused. The folly of most people is rather an object of mirth than uneasiness.

Hastings [*To him*]. Bravo, bravo. Never spoke so well in your whole life. Well, Miss Hardcastle, I see that you and Mr. Marlow are going to be very good company. I believe our being here will but embarrass the interview.

Marlow. Not in the least, Mr. Hastings. We like your company of all things. [*To him.*] Zounds! George, sure you won't go? How can you leave us?

Hastings. Our presence will but spoil conversation, so we'll retire to the next room. [*To him.*] You don't consider, man, that we are to manage a little *tête-a-tête* of our own. [*Exeunt.*

Miss Hard. [*After a pause.*] But you have not been wholly an observer, I presume, sir. The ladies, I should hope, have employed some part of your addresses.

Marlow [*Relapsing into timidity*]. Pardon me, madam, I—I—I—as yet have studied—only—to—deserve them.

Miss Hard. And that, some say, is the very worst way to obtain them.

Marlow. Perhaps so, madam. But I love to converse only with the more grave and sensible part of the sex. ——But I'm afraid I grow tiresome.

Miss Hard. Not at all, sir; there is nothing I like so

much as grave conversation myself: I could hear it for ever. Indeed, I have often been surprised how a man of *sentiment* could ever admire those light airy pleasures, where nothing reaches the heart.

Marlow. It's—a disease—of the mind, madam. In the variety of tastes there must be some who, wanting a relish for—um-a-um.

Miss Hard. I understand you, sir. There must be some, who, wanting a relish for refined pleasures, pretend to despise what they are incapable of tasting.

Marlow. My meaning, madam, but infinitely better expressed. And I can't help observing—a——

Miss Hard. [*Aside.*] Who could ever suppose this fellow impudent upon some occasions? [*To him.*] You were going to observe, sir——

Marlow. I was observing madam —— I protest, madam, I forget what I was going to observe.

Miss Hard. [*Aside.*] I vow and so do I. [*To him.*] You were observing, sir, that in this age of hypocrisy—something about hypocrisy, sir.

Marlow. Yes, madam. In this age of hypocrisy, there are few who upon strict enquiry do not—a—a—a——

Miss Hard. I understand you perfectly, sir.

Marlow [*Aside.*] Egad! and that's more than I do myself!

Miss Hard. You mean that in this hypocritical age there are few that do not condemn in public what they practise in private, and think they pay every debt to virtue when they praise it.

Marlow. True, madam; those who have most virtue in their mouths have least of it in their bosoms. But I'm sure I tire you, madam.

Miss Hard. Not in the least, sir; there's something so agreeable and spirited in your manner, such life and force——pray, sir, go on.

Marlow. Yes, madam. I was saying——that there are some occasions——when a total want of courage, madam, destroys all the——and puts us——upon a——a——

Miss Hard. I agree with you entirely: a want of courage upon some occasions assumes the appearance of ignorance, and betrays us when we most want to excel. I beg you'll proceed.

Marlow. Yes, madam. Morally speaking, madam—— But I see Miss Neville expecting us in the next room. I would not intrude for the world.

Miss Hard. I protest, sir, I never was more agreeably entertained in all my life. Pray, go on.

Marlow. Yes, madam. I was——But she beckons us to join her. Madam, shall I do myself the honour to attend you?

Miss Hard. Well, then, I'll follow.

Marlow [*Aside.*] This pretty smooth dialogue has done for me. [*Exit.*

MISS HARDCASTLE, *sola.*

Miss Hard. Ha! ha! ha! Was there ever such a sober, sentimental interview? I'm certain he scarce looked in my face the whole time. Yet the fellow, but for his unaccountable bashfulness, is pretty well, too. He has good sense, but then so buried in his fears that it fatigues one more than ignorance. If I could teach him a little confidence, it would be doing somebody that I know of a piece of service. But who is that somebody?—that, faith, is a question I can scarce answer. [*Exit.*

Enter TONY *and* MISS NEVILLE, *followed by* MRS. HARDCASTLE *and* HASTINGS.

Tony. What do you follow me for, cousin Con? I wonder you're not ashamed to be so very engaging.

Miss Neville. I hope, cousin, one may speak to one's own relations and not be to blame.

Tony. Ay, but I know what sort of a relation you want to make me, though; but it won't do. I tell you, cousin Con, it won't do, so I beg you'll keep your distance; I want no nearer relationship.

[*She follows coquetting him to the back scene.*

Mrs. Hard. Well! I vow, Mr. Hastings, you are very entertaining. There's nothing in the world I love to talk of so much as London, and the fashions, though I was never there myself.

Hastings. Never there! You amaze me! From your air and manner I concluded you had been bred all your life either at Ranelagh, St. James's or Tower Wharf.

Mrs. Hard. O! sir, you're only pleased to say so. We country persons can have no manner at all. I'm in love with the town, and that serves to raise me above some of our neighboring rustics; but who can have a manner that has never seen the Pantheon, the Grotto Gardens, the Borough, and such places where the nobility chiefly resort? All I can do is to enjoy London at second-hand. I take care to know every *tête-a-tête* from the Scandalous Magazine, and have all the fashions as they come out, in a letter from the two Miss Rickets of Crooked Lane. Pray, how do you like this head, Mr. Hastings?

Hastings. Extremely elegant and *degagée*, upon my word, madam. Your friseur is a Frenchman, I suppose?

Mrs. Hard. I protest; I dressed it myself from a print in the Ladies' Memorandum-book for the last year.

Hastings. Indeed. Such a head in a side-box at the Play-house would draw as many gazers as my Lady Mayoress at a City Ball.

Mrs. Hard. I vow, since inoculation began, there is no such thing to be seen as a plain woman; so one must dress a little particular or one may escape in the crowd.

Hastings. But that can never be your case, madam, in any dress! [*Bowing.*]

Mrs. Hard. Yet, what signifies *my* dressing when I have such a piece of antiquity by my side as Mr. Hardcastle: all I can say will never argue down a single button from his clothes. I have often wanted him to throw off his great flaxen wig, and where he was bald, to plaster it over, like my Lord Pately, with powder.

Hastings. You are right, madam; for, as among the ladies there are none ugly, so among the men there are none old.

Mrs. Hard. But what do you think his answer was? Why, with his usual Gothic vivacity, he said I only wanted him to throw off his wig to convert it into a *tête* for my own wearing!

Hastings. Intolerable! At your age you may wear what you please, and it must become you.

Mrs. Hard. Pray, Mr. Hastings, what do you take to be the most fashionable age about town?

Hastings. Some time ago forty was all the mode; but I'm told the ladies intend to bring up fifty for the ensuing winter.

Mrs. Hard. Seriously. Then I shall be too young for the fashion!

Hastings. No lady begins now to put on jewels till she's past forty. For instance, miss there, in a polite circle, would be considered as a child, as a mere maker of samplers.

Mrs. Hard. And yet Mrs. Niece thinks herself as much a woman, and is as fond of jewels as the oldest of us all.

Hastings. You niece, is she? And that young gentleman, a brother of yours, I should presume?

Mrs. Hard. My son, sir. They are contracted to each other. Observe their little sports. They fall in and out ten times a day, as if they were man and wife

already. [*To them.*] Well, Tony, child, what soft things are you saying to your cousin Constance this evening?

Tony. I have been saying no soft things; but that it's very hard to be followed about so! Ecod! I've not a place in the house now that's left to myself but the stable.

Mrs. Hard. Never mind him, Con, my dear. He's in another story behind your back.

Miss Neville. There's something generous in my cousin's manner. He falls out before faces to be forgiven in private.

Tony. That's a damned confounded——crack.

Mrs. Hard. Ah! he's a sly one. Don't you think they're like each other about the mouth, Mr. Hastings? The Blenkinsop mouth to a T. They're of a size, too. Back to back, my pretties, that Mr. Hastings may see you. Come, Tony.

Tony. You had as good not make me, I tell you. [*Measuring.*

Miss Neville. O lud! he has almost cracked my head.

Mrs. Hard. O, the monster! For shame, Tony. You a man, and behave so!

Tony. If I'm a man, let me have my fortin. Ecod! I'll not be made a fool of no longer.

Mrs. Hard. Is this, ungrateful boy, all that I'm to get for the pains I have taken in your education? I that have rocked you in your cradle, and fed that pretty mouth with a spoon! Did not I work that waistcoat to make you genteel? Did not I prescribe for you every day, and weep while the receipt was operating?

Tony. Ecod! you had reason to weep, for you have been dosing me ever since I was born. I have gone through every receipt in the complete housewife ten times over; and you have thoughts of coursing me

through *Quincy* next spring. But, ecod! I tell you, I'll not be made a fool of no longer.

Mrs. Hard. Wasn't it all for your good, viper? Wasn't it all for your good?

Tony. I wish you'd let me and my good alone, then. Snubbing this way when I'm in spirits. If I'm to have any good, let it come of itself; not to keep dinging it, dinging it into one so.

Mrs. Hard. That's false; I never see you when you're in spirits. No, Tony, you then go to the alehouse or kennel. I'm never to be delighted with your agreeable, wild notes, unfeeling monster!

Tony. Ecod! Mamma, your own notes are the wildest of the two.

Mrs. Hard. Was ever the like? But I see he wants to break my heart, I see he does.

Hastings. Dear madam, permit me to lecture the young gentleman a little. I'm certain I can persuade him to his duty.

Mrs. Hard. Well! I must retire. Come, Constance, my love. You see, Mr. Hastings, the wretchedness of my situation. Was ever poor woman so plagued with a dear, sweet, pretty, provoking, undutiful boy.

[*Exeunt Mrs. Hardcastle and Miss Neville.*

HASTINGS *and* TONY.

Tony [*singing*]. *There was a young man riding by, and fain would have his will. Rang do didlo dee.* Don't mind her. Let her cry. It's the comfort of her heart. I have seen her and sister cry over a book for an hour together, and they said they liked the book the better the more it made them cry.

Hastings. Then you're no friend to the ladies, I find, my pretty young gentleman?

Tony. That's as I find 'um.

Hastings. Not to her of your mother's choosing, I dare answer! And yet she appears to me a pretty, well-tempered girl.

Tony. That's because you don't know her as well as I. Ecod! I know every inch about her; and there's not a more bitter, cantankerous toad in all Christendom!

Hastings [*Aside.*] Pretty encouragement, this, for a lover!

Tony. I have seen her since the height of that. She has as many tricks as a hare in a thicket, or a colt the first day's breaking.

Hastings. To me she appears sensible and silent!

Tony. Ay, before company. But when she's with her playmates she's as loud as a hog in a gate.

Hastings. But there is a meek modesty about her that charms me.

Tony. Yes, but curb her never so little, she kicks up, and you're flung in a ditch.

Hastings. Well, but you must allow her a little beauty.—Yes, you must allow her some beauty.

Tony. Bandbox! She's all a made up thing, mun. Ah! could you but see Bet Bouncer of these parts, you might then talk of beauty. Ecod, she has two eyes as black as sloes, and cheeks as broad and red as a pulpit cushion. She'd make two of she.

Hastings. Well, what say you to a friend that would take this bitter bargain off your hands?

Tony. Anon.

Hastings. Would you thank him that would take Miss Neville, and leave you to happiness and your dear Betsy?

Tony. Ay; but where is there such a friend, for who would take *her?*

Hastings. I am he. If you but assist me, I'll engage to whip her off to France, and you shall never hear more of her.

Tony. Assist you! Ecod, I will, to the last drop of my blood. I'll clap a pair of horses to your chaise that shall trundle you off in a twinkling, and may be get you a part of her fortin besides, in jewels, that you little dream of.

Hastings. My dear 'Squire, this looks like a lad of spirit.

Tony. Come along then, and you shall see more of my spirit before you have done with me. [*Singing.*

We are the boys
That fear no noise
Where the thundering cannons roar.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III

Enter HARDCASTLE, *solus*

Hard. What could my old friend Sir Charles mean by recommending his son as the modestest young man in town? To me he appears the most impudent piece of brass that ever spoke with a tongue. He has taken possession of the easy chair by the fireside already. He took off his boots in the parlour, and desired me to see them taken care of. I'm desirous to know how his impudence affects my daughter.—She will certainly be shocked at it.

Enter MISS HARDCASTLE, *plainly dressed.*

Hard. Well, my Kate, I see you have changed your dress as I bid you; and yet, I believe, there was no great occasion.

Miss Hard. I find such a pleasure, sir, in obeying your commands that I take care to observe them without ever debating their propriety.

Hard. And yet, Kate, I sometimes give you some cause, particularly when I recommended my *modest* gentleman to you as a lover to-day.

Miss Hard. You taught me to expect something extraordinary, and I find the original exceeds the description!

Hard. I was never so surprised in my life! He has quite confounded all my faculties!

Miss Hard. I never saw anything like it: And a man of the world, too!

Hard. Ay, he learned it all abroad,—what a fool was I, to think a young man could learn modesty by travelling. He might as soon learn wit at a masquerade.

Miss Hard. It seems all natural to him.

Hard. A good deal assisted by bad company and a French dancing-master.

Miss Hard. Sure, you mistake, papa! a French dancing-master could never have taught him that timid look,—that awkward address,—that bashful manner——

Hard. Whose look? whose manner? child!

Miss Hard. Mr. Marlow's: his *mauvaise honte,* his timidity, struck me at the first sight.

Hard. Then your first sight deceived you; for I think him one of the most brazen first sights that ever astonished my senses!

Miss Hard. Sure, sir, you rally! I never saw anyone so modest.

Hard. And can you be serious? I never saw such a bouncing, swaggering puppy since I was born. Bully Dawson was but a fool to him.

Miss Hard. Surprising! He met me with a respectful bow, a stammering voice, and a look fixed on the ground.

Hard. He met me with a loud voice, a lordly air, and a familiarity that made my blood freeze again.

Miss Hard. He treated me with diffidence and respect; censured the manners of the age; admired the prudence of girls that never laughed; tired me with apologies for being tiresome; then left the room with a bow, and, "madam, I would not for the world detain you."

Hard. He spoke to me as if he knew me all his life before. Asked twenty questions, and never waited for an answer. Interrupted my best remarks with some silly pun, and when I was in my best story of the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene, he asked if I had

not a good hand at making punch. Yes, Kate, he asked your father if he was a maker of punch!

Miss Hard. One of us must certainly be mistaken.

Hard. If he be what he has shown himself, I'm determined he shall never have my consent.

Miss Hard. And if he be the sullen thing I take him, he shall never have mine.

Hard. In one thing then we are agreed—to reject him.

Miss Hard. Yes. But upon conditions. For if you should find him less impudent, and I more presuming; if you find him more respectful, and I more importunate——I don't know——the fellow is well enough for a man—Certainly we don't meet many such at a horse race in the country.

Hard. If we should find him so——But that's impossible. The first appearance has done my business. I'm seldom deceived in that.

Miss Hard. And yet there may be many good qualities under that first appearance.

Hard. Ay, when a girl finds a fellow's outside to her taste, she then sets about guessing the rest of his furniture. With her, a smooth face stands for good sense, and a genteel figure for every virtue.

Miss Hard. I hope, sir, a conversation begun with a compliment to my good sense won't end with a sneer at my understanding?

Hard. Pardon me, Kate. But if young Mr. Brazen can find the art of reconciling contradictions he may please us both, perhaps.

Miss Hard. And as one of us must be mistaken, what if we go to make further discoveries?

Hard. Agreed. But depend on't, I'm in the right.

Miss Hard. And depend on't, I'm not much in the wrong. [*Exeunt.*

Enter TONY, *running in, with a Casket.*

Tony. Ecod! I have got them. Here they are. My cousin Con's necklaces, bobs and all. My mother sha'n't cheat the poor souls out of their fortin neither. O! my genus, is that you?

Enter HASTINGS.

Hastings. My dear friend, how have you managed with your mother? I hope you have amused her with pretending love for your cousin, and that you are willing to be reconciled at last? Our horses will be refreshed in a short time, and we shall soon be ready to set off.

Tony. And here's something to bear your charges by the way. [*Giving the casket.*] Your sweetheart's jewels. Keep them, and hang those, I say, that would rob you of one of them!

Hastings. But how have you procured them from your mother?

Tony. Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no fibs. I procured them by the rule of thumb. If I had not a key to every drawer in mother's bureau, how could I go to the alehouse so often as I do? An honest man may rob himself of his own at any time.

Hastings. Thousands do it every day. But to be plain with you: Miss Neville is endeavouring to procure them from her aunt this very instant. If she succeeds, it will be the most delicate way at least of obtaining them.

Tony. Well, keep them, till you know how it will be. But I know how it will be well enough: she'd as soon part with the only sound tooth in her head!

Hastings. But I dread the effects of her resentment, when she finds she has lost them.

Tony. Never you mind her resentment; leave *me* to

manage that. I don't value her resentment the bounce of a cracker. Zounds! here they are! Morrice, Prance! [*Exit Hastings.*

TONY, MRS. HARDCASTLE *and* MISS NEVILLE.

Mrs. Hard. Indeed, Constance, you amaze me. Such a girl as you want jewels? It will be time enough for jewels, my dear, twenty years hence, when your beauty begins to want repairs.

Miss Neville. But what will repair beauty at forty, will certainly improve it at twenty, madam.

Mrs. Hard. Yours, my dear, can admit of none. That natural blush is beyond a thousand ornaments. Besides, child, jewels are quite out at present. Don't you see half the ladies of our acquaintance, my Lady Kill-day-light, and Mrs. Crump, and the rest of them, carry their jewels to town, and bring nothing but paste and marcasites back?

Miss Neville. But who knows, madam, but somebody that shall be nameless would like me best with all my little finery about me?

Mrs. Hard. Consult your glass, my dear, and then see if, with such a pair of eyes, you want any better sparklers. What do you think, Tony, my dear: does your cousin Con want any jewels, in your eyes, to set off her beauty?

Tony. That's as thereafter may be.

Miss Neville. My dear aunt, if you knew how it would oblige me.

Mrs. Hard. A parcel of old-fashioned rose and table-cut things. They would make you look like the court of King Solomon at a puppet-show. Besides, I believe I can't readily come at them. They may be missing, for aught I know to the contrary.

Tony. [*Apart to Mrs. Hard.*] Then why don't you tell

her so at once, as she's so longing for them. Tell her they're lost. It's the only way to quiet her. Say they're lost, and call me to bear witness.

Mr. Hard. [*Apart to Tony.*] You know, my dear, I'm only keeping them for you. So if I say they're gone, you'll bear me witness, will you? He! he! he!

Tony. Never fear me. Ecod! I'll say I saw them taken out with my own eyes.

Miss Neville. I desire them but for a day, madam. Just to be permitted to show them as relics, and then they may be locked up again.

Mrs. Hard. To be plain with you, my dear Constance, if I could find them, you should have them. They're missing, I assure you. Lost, for aught I know; but we must have patience, wherever they are.

Miss Neville. I'll not believe it; this is but a shallow pretence to deny me. I know they're too valuable to be so slightly kept, and as you are to answer for the loss.

Mrs. Hard. Don't be alarmed, Constance. If they be lost, I must restore an equivalent. But my son knows they are missing, and not to be found.

Tony. That I can bear witness to. They are missing and not to be found; I'll take my oath on't!

Mrs. Hard. You must learn resignation, my dear; for though we lost our fortune, yet we should not lose our patience. See me, how calm I am!

Miss Neville. Ay, people are generally calm at the misfortunes of others.

Mrs. Hard. Now, I wonder a girl of your good sense should waste a thought upon such trumpery. We shall soon find them; and, in the meantime, you shall make use of my garnets till your jewels be found.

Miss Neville. I detest garnets!

Mrs. Hard. The most becoming things in the world to set off a clear complexion. You have often seen how

well they look upon me. You *shall* have them. [*Exit.*

Miss Neville. I dislike them of all things. You shan't stir.—Was ever anything so provoking, to mislay my own jewels and force me to wear her trumpery?

Tony. Don't be a fool. If she gives you the garnets, take what you can get. The jewels are your own already. I have stolen them out of her bureau, and she does not know it. Fly to your spark; he'll tell you more of the matter. Leave me to manage *her.*

Miss Neville. My dear cousin!

Tony. Vanish. She's here, and has missed them already. Zounds! how she fidgets and spits about like a Catharine wheel!

Enter Mrs. Hardcastle.

Mrs. Hard. Confusion! thieves! robbers! We are cheated, plundered, broke open, undone!

Tony. What's the matter, what's the matter, mamma? I hope nothing has happened to any of the good family!

Mrs. Hard. We are robbed. My bureau has been broke open, the jewels taken out, and I'm undone!

Tony. Oh! is that all? Ha! ha! ha! By the laws, I never saw it better acted in my life. Ecod, I thought you was ruined in earnest, ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Hard. Why, boy, I *am* ruined in earnest. My bureau has been broke open and all taken away.

Tony. Stick to that; ha, ha, ha! stick to that. I'll bear witness, you know; call me to bear witness.

Mrs. Hard. I tell you, Tony, by all that's precious, the jewels are gone, and I shall be ruined for ever!

Tony. Sure I know they're gone, and I am to say so.

Mrs. Hard. My dearest Tony, but hear me. They're gone, I say.

Tony. By the laws, mamma, you make me for to

laugh, ha! ha! I know who took them well enough, ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Hard. Was there ever such a blockhead, that can't tell the difference between jest and earnest. I tell you I'm not in jest, booby!

Tony. That's right, that's right: You must be in a bitter passion, and then nobody will suspect either of us. I'll bear witness that they are gone.

Mrs. Hard. Was there ever such a cross-grained brute, that won't hear me! Can you bear witness that you're no better than a fool? Was ever poor woman so beset with fools on one hand, and thieves on the other?

Tony. I can bear witness to that.

Mrs. Hard. Bear witness again, you blockhead, you, and I'll turn you out of the room directly. My poor niece, what will become of *her?* Do you laugh, you unfeeling brute, as if you enjoyed my distress?

Tony. I can bear witness to that.

Mrs. Hard. Do you insult me, monster? I'll teach you to vex your mother, I will!

Tony. I can bear witness to that.

[*He runs off; she follows him.*

Enter MISS HARDCASTLE *and* MAID.

Miss Hard. What an unaccountable creature is that brother of mine, to send them to the house as an inn, ha! ha! I don't wonder at his impudence.

Maid. But what is more, madam, the young gentleman as you passed by in your present dress asked me if you were the barmaid. He mistook you for the barmaid, madam!

Miss Hard. Did he? Then as I live I'm resolved to keep up the delusion. Tell me, Pimple, how do you like

my present dress? Don't you think I look something like Cherry in the Beaux' Stratagem?

Maid. It's the dress, madam, that every lady wears in the country, but when she visits or receives company.

Miss Hard. And are you sure he does not remember my face or person?

Maid. Certain of it!

Miss Hard. I vow, I thought so; for though we spoke for some time together, yet his fears were such, that he never once looked up during the interview. Indeed, if he had, my bonnet would have kept him from seeing me.

Maid. But what do you hope from keeping him in his mistake?

Miss Hard. In the first place, I shall be *seen*, and that is no small advantage to a girl who brings her face to market. Then I shall perhaps make an acquaintance, and that's no small victory gained over one who never addresses any but the wildest of her sex. But my chief aim is to take my gentleman off his guard, and like an invisible champion of romance examine the giant's force before I offer to combat.

Maid. But you are sure you can act your part, and disguise your voice, so that he may mistake that, as he has already mistaken your person?

Miss Hard. Never fear me. I think I have got the true bar cant.—Did your honour call?——Attend the Lion there.—Pipes and tobacco for the Angel.—The Lamb has been outrageous this half-hour!

Maid. It will do, madam. But he's here.

[*Exit Maid.*

Enter MARLOW.

Marlow. What a bawling in every part of the house; I have scarce a moment's repose. If I go to the best room, there I find my host and his story. If I fly to the

gallery, there we have my hostess with her curtsey down to the ground. I have at last got a moment to myself, and now for recollection. [*Walks and muses.*

Miss Hard. Did you call, sir? did your honour call?

Marlow [*musing*]. As for Miss Hardcastle, she's too grave and sentimental for me.

Miss Hard. Did your honour call?

[*She still places herself before him; he turning away.*

Marlow. No, child! [*Musing.*] Besides from the glimpse I had of her, I think she squints.

Miss Hard. I'm sure, sir, I heard the bell ring.

Marlow. No, no! [*Musing.*] I have pleased my father, however, by coming down, and I'll to-morrow please myself by returning.

[*Taking out his tablets and perusing.*

Miss Hard. Perhaps the other gentleman called, sir?

Marlow. I tell you, no.

Miss Hard. I should be glad to know, sir. We have such a parcel of servants.

Marlow. No, no, I tell you. [*Looks full in her face.*] Yes, child, I think I did call. I wanted——I wanted——I vow, child, you are vastly handsome!

Miss Hard. O la, sir, you'll make one ashamed.

Marlow. Never saw a more sprightly malicious eye. Yes, yes, my dear, I did call. Have you got any of your—a—what d'ye call it in the house?

Miss Hard. No, sir, we have been out of that these ten days.

Marlow. One may call in this house, I find, to very little purpose. Suppose I should call for a taste, just by way of trial, of the nectar of your lips; perhaps I might be disappointed in that, too!

Miss Hard. Nectar! nectar! that's a liquor there's no call for in these parts. French, I suppose. We keep no French wines here, sir.

Marlow. Of true English growth, I assure you.

Miss Hard. Then it's odd I should not know it. We brew all sorts of wines in this house, and I have lived here these eighteen years.

Marlow. Eighteen years! Why one would think, child, you kept the bar before you were born. How old are you?

Miss Hard. O! sir, I must not tell my age. They say women and music should never be dated.

Marlow. To guess at this distance, you can't be much above forty. [*Approaching.*] Yet nearer I don't think so much. [*Approaching.*] By coming close to some women they look younger still; but when we come very close indeed—[*attempting to kiss her*].

Miss Hard. Pray, sir, keep your distance. One would think you wanted to know one's age as they do horses, by mark of mouth.

Marlow. I protest, child, you use me extremely ill. If you keep me at this distance, how is it possible you and I can ever be acquainted?

Miss Hard. And who wants to be acquainted with you? I want no such acquaintance, not I. I'm sure you did not treat Miss Hardcastle that was here awhile ago in this obstropalous manner. I'll warrant me, before her you looked dashed, and kept bowing to the ground, and talked, for all the world, as if you was before a justice of peace.

Marlow [*Aside.*] Egad! she has hit it, sure enough. [*To her.*] In awe of her, child? Ha! ha! ha! A mere awkward, squinting thing, no, no! I find you don't know me. I laughed, and rallied her a little; but I was unwilling to be too severe. No, I could not be too severe, curse me!

Miss Hard. O! then, sir, you are a favourite, I find, among the ladies?

Marlow. Yes, my dear, a great favourite. And yet, hang me, I don't see what they find in me to follow.

At the Ladies' Club in town I'm called their agreeable Rattle. Rattle, child, is not my real name, but one I'm known by. My name is Solomons. Mr. Solomons, my dear, at your service. [*Offering to salute her.*

Miss Hard. Hold, sir; you were introducing me to your club, not to yourself. And you're so great a favourite there, you say?

Marlow. Yes, my dear. There's Mrs. Mantrap, Lady Betty Blackleg, the Countess of Sligo, Mrs. Longhorns, old Miss Biddy Buckskin and your humble servant, keep up the spirit of the place.

Miss Hard. Then it's a very merry place, I suppose.

Marlow. Yes, as merry as cards, suppers, wine and old women can make us.

Miss Hard. And their agreeable Rattle, ha! ha! ha!

Marlow [*Aside.*] Egad! I don't quite like this chit. She looks knowing, methinks. You laugh, child!

Miss Hard. I can't but laugh to think what time they all have for minding their work or their family.

Marlow [*Aside.*] All's well, she don't laugh at me. [*To her.*] Do *you* ever work, child?

Miss Hard. Ay, sure. There's not a screen or a quilt in the whole house but what can bear witness to that.

Marlow. Odso! Then you must show me your embroidery. I embroider and draw patterns myself a little. If you want a judge of your work you must apply to me. [*Seizing her hand.*

Miss Hard. Ay, but the colours don't look well by candle light. You shall see all in the morning.

[*Struggling.*

Marlow. And why not now, my angel? Such beauty fires beyond the power of resistance.——Pshaw! the father here! My old luck: I never nicked seven that I did not throw amesace three times following.

[*Exit Marlow.*

Enter HARDCASTLE, *who stands in surprise.*

Hard. So, madam. So I find *this* is your *modest* lover. This is your humble admirer that kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and only adored at humble distance. Kate, Kate, are thou not ashamed to deceive your father so?

Miss Hard. Never trust me, dear papa, but he's still the modest man I first took him for, you'll be convinced of it as well as I.

Hard. By the hand of my body, I believe his impudence is infectious! Didn't I see him seize your hand? Didn't I see him haul you about like a milk-maid? and now you talk of his respect and his modesty, forsooth!

Miss Hard. But if I shortly convince you of his modesty, that he has only the faults that will pass off with time, and the virtues that will improve with age, I hope you'll forgive him.

Hard. The girl would actually make one run mad! I tell you I'll not be convinced. I am convinced. He has scarcely been three hours in the house, and he has already encroached on all my prerogatives. You may like his impudence, and call it modesty. But my son-in-law, madam, must have very different qualifications.

Miss Hard. Sir, I ask but this night to convince you.

Hard. You shall not have half the time, for I have thought of turning him out this very hour.

Miss Hard. Give me that hour then, and I hope to satisfy you.

Hard. Well, an hour let it be then. But I'll have no trifling with your father. All fair and open, do you mind me?

Miss Hard. I hope, sir, you have ever found that I considered your commands as my pride; for your kindness is such that my duty as yet has been inclination.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV

Enter HASTINGS *and* MISS NEVILLE

Hastings. You surprise me! Sir Charles Marlow expected here this night? Where have you had your information?

Miss Neville. You may depend upon it. I just saw his letter to Mr. Hardcastle, in which he tells him he intends setting out a few hours after his son.

Hastings. Then, my Constance, all must be completed before he arrives. He knows me; and should he find me here, would discover my name, and perhaps my designs, to the rest of the family.

Miss Neville. The jewels, I hope, are safe.

Hastings. Yes, yes. I have sent them to Marlow, who keeps the keys of our baggage. In the meantime, I'll go to prepare matters for our elopement. I have had the Squire's promise of a fresh pair of horses; and, if I should not see him again, will write him further directions. [*Exit.*

Miss Neville. Well! success attend you. In the meantime, I'll go amuse my aunt with the old pretence of a violent passion for my cousin. [*Exit.*

Enter MARLOW, *followed by a Servant.*

Marlow. I wonder what Hastings could mean by sending me so valuable a thing as a casket to keep for him, when he knows the only place I have is the seat of a post-coach at an inn-door. Have you deposited the casket with the landlady, as I ordered you? Have you put it into her own hands?

Servant. Yes, your honour.

Marlow. She said she'd keep it safe, did she?

Servant. Yes, she said she'd keep it safe enough; she asked me how I came by it? and she said she had a great mind to make me give an account of myself.

[*Exit Servant.*

Marlow. Ha! ha! ha! They're safe, however. What an unaccountable set of beings have we got amongst! This little barmaid, though, runs in my head most strangely, and drives out the absurdities of all the rest of the family. She's mine, she must be mine, or I'm greatly mistaken.

Enter HASTINGS.

Hastings. Bless me! I quite forgot to tell her that I intended to prepare at the bottom of the garden. Marlow here, and in spirits, too!

Marlow. Give me joy, George! Crown me, shadow me with laurels! Well, George, after all, we modest fellows don't want for success among the women.

Hastings. Some women, you mean. But what success has your honour's modesty been crowned with now that it grows so insolent upon us?

Marlow. Didn't you see the tempting, brisk, lovely little thing that runs about the house with a bunch of keys to its girdle?

Hastings. Well! and what then?

Marlow. She's mine, you rogue, you. Such fire, such motion, such eyes, such lips——but egad! she would not let me kiss them, though.

Hastings. But are you sure, so very sure of her?

Marlow. Why, man, she talked of showing me her work above-stairs, and I am to improve the pattern.

Hastings. But how can *you*, Charles, go about to rob a woman of her honour?

Marlow. Pshaw! pshaw! we all know the honour of the barmaid of an inn. I don't intend to *rob* her, take my word for it; there's nothing in this house I shan't honestly *pay* for!

Hastings. I believe the girl has virtue.

Marlow. And if she has, I should be the last man in the world that would attempt to corrupt it

Hastings. You have taken care, I hope, of the casket I sent you to lock up? It's in safety?

Marlow. Yes, yes. It's safe nough. I have taken care of it. But how could you think the seat of a post-coach at an inn-door a place of safety? Ah! numbskull! I have taken better precautions for you than you did for yourself.——I have——

Hastings. What?

Marlow. I have sent it to the landlady to keep for you.

Hastings. To the landlady!

Marlow. The landlady.

Hastings. You did!

Marlow. I did. She's to be answerable for its forthcoming, you know.

Hastings. Yes, she'll bring it forth with a witness.

Marlow. Wasn't I right? I believe you'll allow that I acted prudently upon this occasion?

Hastings [*Aside.*] He must not see my uneasiness.

Marlow. You seem a little disconcerted, though, methinks. Sure nothing has happened?

Hastings. No, nothing. Never was in better spirits in all my life. And so you left it with the landlady, who, no doubt, very readily undertook the charge?

Marlow. Rather too readily. For she not only kept the casket, but, through her great precaution, was going to keep the messenger too. Ha! ha! ha!

Hastings. He! he! he! They're safe, however.

Marlow. As a guinea in a miner's purse.

Hastings [*Aside.*] So now all hopes of fortune are at an end, and we must set off without it. [*To him.*] Well, Charles, I'll leave you to your meditations on the pretty barmaid, and, he! he! he! may you be as successful for yourself as you have been for me. [*Exit.*

Marlow. Thank ye, George! I ask no more. Ha! ha! ha!

Enter HARDCASTLE.

Hard. I no longer know my own house. It's turned all topsy-turvy. His servants have got drunk already. I'll bear it no longer, and yet, from my respect for his father, I'll be calm. [*To him.*] Mr. Marlow, your servant. I'm your very humble servant. [*Bowing low.*

Marlow. Sir, your humble servant. [*Aside.*] What's to be the wonder now?

Hard. I believe, sir, you must be sensible, sir, that no man alive ought to be more welcome than your father's son, sir. I hope you think so?

Marlow. I do, from my soul, sir. I don't want much entreaty. I generally make my father's son welcome wherever he goes.

Hard. I believe you do, from my soul, sir. But though I say nothing to your own conduct, that of your servants is insufferable. Their manner of drinking is setting a very bad example in this house, I assure you.

Marlow. I protest, my very good sir, that's no fault of mine. If they don't drink as they ought, *they* are to blame. I ordered them not to spare the cellar, I did, I assure you. [*To the side scene.*] Here, let one of my servants come up. [*To him.*] My positive directions were, that as I did not drink myself, they should make up for my deficiencies below.

Hard. Then they had your orders for what they do! I'm satisfied!

Marlow. They had, I assure you. You shall hear from one of themselves.

Enter SERVANT, *drunk.*

Marlow. You, Jeremy! Come forward, sirrah; What were my orders? Were you not told to drink freely, and call for what you thought fit, for the good of the house?

Hard. [*Aside.*] I begin to lose my patience.

Jeremy. Please, your honour, liberty and Fleet Street for ever! Though I'm but a servant, I'm as good as another man. I'll drink for no man before supper, sir, dammy! Good liquor will sit upon a good supper, but a good supper will not sit upon—hiccup—upon my conscience, sir.

Marlow. You see, my old friend, the fellow is as drunk as he can possibly be. I don't know what you'd have more, unless you'd have the poor devil soused in a beer-barrel.

Hard. Zounds! He'll drive me distracted if I contain myself any longer. Mr. Marlow, Sir: I have submitted to your insolence for more than four hours, and I see no likelihood of its coming to an end. I'm now resolved to be master here, sir, and I desire that you and your drunken pack may leave my house directly.

Marlow. Leave your house!—Sure, you jest, my good friend! What, when I'm doing what I can to please you!

Hard. I tell you, sir, you don't please me; so I desire you'll leave my house.

Marlow. Sure, you cannot be serious. At this time of night, and such a night! You only mean to banter me!

Hard. I tell you, sir, I'm serious; and, now that my

passions are roused, I say this house is mine, sir; this house is mine, and I command you to leave it directly.

Marlow. Ha! ha! ha! A puddle in a storm. I shan't stir a step, I assure you. [*In a serious tone.*] This your house, fellow. It's my house. This is my house. Mine, while I choose to stay. What right have you to bid me leave this house, sir? I never met with such impudence, curse me, never in my whole life before!

Hard. Nor I, confound me if ever I did! To come to my house, to call for what he likes, to turn me out of my own chair, to insult the family, to order his servants to get drunk, and then to tell me *This house is mine, sir.* By all that's impudent, it makes me laugh. Ha! ha! ha! Pray, sir [*bantering*], as you take the house, what think you of taking the rest of the furniture? There's a pair of silver candlesticks, and there's a fire-screen, and here's a pair of brazen-nosed bellows, perhaps you may take a fancy to them?

Marlow. Bring me your bill, sir, bring me your bill, and let's make no more words about it.

Hard. There are a set of prints, too. What think you of the Rake's Progress for your own apartment?

Marlow. Bring me your bill, I say; and I'll leave you and your infernal house directly.

Hard. Then there's a mahogany table, that you may see your own face in.

Marlow. My bill, I say.

Hard. I had forgot the great chair, for your own particular slumbers, after a hearty meal.

Marlow. Zounds! bring me my bill, I say, and let's hear no more on't.

Hard. Young man, young man, from your father's letter to me, I was taught to expect a well-bred, modest man as a visitor here, but now I find him no better than a coxcomb and a bully; but he will be down here presently and shall hear more of it. [*Exit.*

Marlow. How's this! Sure, I have not mistaken the house. Everything looks like an inn. The servants cry "Coming." The attendance is awkward; the barmaid, too, to attend us. But she's here, and will further inform me. Whither so fast, child? A word with you.

Enter MISS HARDCASTLE.

Miss Hard. Let it be short, then. I'm in a hurry. [*Aside.*] I believe he begins to find out his mistake, but it's too soon quite to undeceive him.

Marlow. Pray, child, answer me one question. What are you, and what may your business in this house be?

Miss Hard. A relation of the family, sir.

Marlow. What? A poor relation?

Miss Hard. Yes, sir. A poor relation appointed to keep the keys, and to see that the guests want nothing in my power to give them.

Marlow. That is, you act as the barmaid of this inn.

Miss Hard. Inn! O law!—What brought that in your head? One of the best families in the county keep an inn! Ha, ha, ha, old Mr. Hardcastle's house an inn!

Marlow. Mr. Hardcastle's house! Is this house Mr. Hardcastle's house, child?

Miss Hard. Ay, sure. Whose else should it be?

Marlow. So then all's out, and I have been damnably imposed on. O, confound my stupid head, I shall be laughed at over the whole town. I shall be stuck up in caricature in all the print-shops. The Dullissimo Maccaroni. To mistake this house of all others for an inn, and my father's old friend for an inn-keeper! What a swaggering puppy must he take me for. What a silly puppy do I find myself. There again, may I be hanged, my dear, but I mistook you for the barmaid!

Miss Hard. Dear me! dear me! I'm sure there's

nothing in my *behaviour* to put me upon a level with one of that stamp.

Marlow. Nothing, my dear, nothing. But I was in for a list of blunders, and could not help making you a subscriber. My stupidity saw everything the wrong way. I mistook your assiduity for assurance, and your simplicity for allurement. But it's over—this house I no more show *my* face in!

Miss Hard. I hope, sir, I have done nothing to disoblige you. I'm sure I should be sorry to affront any gentleman who has been so polite, and said so many civil things to me. I'm sure I should be sorry [*pretending to cry*] if he left the family upon my account. I'm sure I should be sorry people said anything amiss, since I have no fortune but my character.

Marlow [*Aside.*] By heaven, she weeps. This is the first mark of tenderness I ever had from a modest woman, and it touches me. [*To her.*] Excuse me, my lovely girl, you are the only part of the family I leave with reluctance. But to be plain with you, the difference of our birth, fortune and education, make an honourable connexion impossible; and I can never harbour a thought of seducing simplicity that trusted in my honour, or bringing ruin upon one whose only fault was being too lovely.

Miss Hard. [*Aside.*] Generous man! I now begin to admire him. [*To him.*] But I'm sure my family is as good as Miss Hardcastle's, and though I'm poor, that's no great misfortune to a contented mind, and, until this moment, I never thought that it was bad to want fortune.

Marlow. And why now, my pretty simplicity?

Miss Hard. Because it puts me at a distance from one that if I had a thousand pound I would give it all to.

Marlow. [*Aside.*] This simplicity bewitches me, so

that if I stay I'm undone. I must make one bold effort and leave her. [*To her.*] Your partiality in my favour, my dear, touches me most sensibly, and were I to live for myself alone, I could easily fix my choice. But I owe too much to the opinion of the world, too much to the authority of a father, so that—I can scarcely speak it—it affects me! Farewell! [*Exit.*

Miss Hard. I never knew half his merit till now. He shall not go, if I have power or art to detain him. I'll still preserve the character in which I stooped to conquer, but will undeceive my papa, who, perhaps, may laugh him out of his resolution. [*Exit.*

Enter TONY *and* MISS NEVILLE.

Tony. Ay, you may steal for yourselves the next time. I have done my duty. She has got the jewels again, that's a sure thing; but she believes it was all a mistake of the servants.

Miss Neville. But, my dear cousin, sure, you won't forsake us in this distress. If she in the least suspects that I am going off, I shall certainly be locked up, or sent to my aunt Pedigree's, which is ten times worse.

Tony. To be sure, aunts of all kinds are damned bad things. But what can I do? I have got you a pair of horses that will fly like Whistlejacket, and I'm sure you can't say but I have courted you nicely before her face. Here she comes; we must court a bit or two more, for fear she should suspect us.

[*They retire, and seem to fondle.*

Enter MRS. HARDCASTLE.

Mrs. Hard. Well, I was greatly fluttered, to be sure. But my son tells me it was all a mistake of the servants. I shan't be easy, however, till they are fairly married,

and then let her keep her own fortune. But what do I see? Fondling together, as I'm alive! I never saw Tony so sprightly before. Ah! have I caught you, my pretty doves! What, billing, exchanging stolen glances, and broken murmurs! Ah!

Tony. As for murmurs, mother, we grumble a little now and then, to be sure. But there's no love lost between us.

Mrs. Hard. A mere sprinkling, Tony, upon the flame, only to make it burn brighter.

Miss Neville. Cousin Tony promises to give us more of his company at home. Indeed, he shan't leave us any more. It won't leave us, cousin Tony, will it?

Tony. O! it's a pretty creature. No, I'd sooner leave my horse in a pound than leave you when you smile upon one so. Your laugh makes you so becoming.

Miss Neville. Agreeable cousin! Who can help admiring that natural humour, that pleasant, broad, red, thoughtless—[*patting his cheek*]—ah! it's a bold face.

Mrs. Hard. Pretty innocence!

Tony. I'm sure I always loved cousin Con's hazel eyes, and her pretty long fingers, that she twists this way and that, over the haspicholls, like a parcel of bobbins.

Mrs. Hard. Ah, he would charm the bird from the tree. I was never so happy before. My boy takes after his father, poor Mr. Lumpkin, exactly. The jewels, my dear Con, shall be yours incontinently. You shall have them. Isn't he a sweet boy, my dear? You shall be married to-morrow, and we'll put off the rest of his education, like Dr. Drowsy's sermons, to a fitter opportunity.

Enter DIGGORY.

Diggory. Where's the 'Squire? I have got a letter for your worship.

Tony. Give it to my mamma. She reads all my letters first.

Diggory. I had orders to deliver it into your own hands.

Tony. Who does it come from?

Diggory. Your worship mun ask that of the letter itself.

Tony. I could wish to know, though. [*Turning the letter and gazing on it.*]

Miss Neville. [*Aside.*] Undone, undone! A letter to him from Hastings. I know the hand. If my aunt sees it we are ruined for ever. I'll keep her employed a little if I can. [*To Mrs. Hardcastle.*] But I have not told you, madam, of my cousin's smart answer just now to Mr. Marlow. We so laughed—you must know, madam—this way a little, for he must not hear us. [*They confer.*]

Tony. [*Still gazing.*] A damned cramp piece of penmanship as ever I saw in my life. I can read your print-hand very well. But here there are such handles, and shanks, and dashes, that one can scarce tell the head from the tail. *To Anthony Lumpkin, Esquire.* It's very odd, I can read the outside of my letters, where my own name is, well enough. But when I come to open it, it's all—buzz. That's hard, very hard; for the inside of the letter is always the cream of the correspondence.

Mrs. Hard. Ha! ha! ha! Very well, very well. And so my son was too hard for the philosopher!

Miss Neville. Yes, madam; but you must hear the rest, madam. A little more this way, or he may hear us. You'll hear how he puzzled him again.

Mrs. Hard. He seems strangely puzzled now himself, methinks.

Tony [*Still gazing*]. A damned up and down hand, as if it was disguised in liquor. [*Reading.*] *Dear Sir.*

Ay, that's that. Then there's an *M* and a *T*, and an *S*, but whether the next be an *izzard* or an *R*, confound me, I cannot tell!

Mrs. Hard. What's that, my dear? Can I give you any assistance?

Miss Neville. Pray, aunt, let me read it. Nobody reads a cramp hand better than I. [*Twitching the letter from her.*] Do you know who it is from?

Tony. Can't tell, except from Dick Ginger, the feeder.

Miss Neville. Ay, so it is. [*Pretending to read.*] Dear 'Squire, Hoping that you're in health, as I am at this present. The gentlemen of the Shake-bag club has cut the gentlemen of Goose-green quite out of feather. The odds—um—odd—battle—um—long fighting—um, here, here, it's all about cocks and fighting; it's of no consequence; here, put it up, put it up.

[*Thrusting the crumpled letter upon him.*

Tony. But I tell you, miss, it's of all the consequence in the world! I would not lose the rest of it for a guinea! Here, mother, do you make it out? Of no consequence! [*Giving Mrs. Hardcastle the letter.*

Mrs. Hard. How's this! [*Reads.*] "Dear 'Squire, I'm now waiting for Miss Neville, with a post-chaise and pair, at the bottom of the garden, but I find my horses yet unable to perform the journey. I expect you'll assist us with a pair of fresh horses, as you promised. Dispatch is necessary, as the *hag* (ay, the hag) your mother, will otherwise suspect us. Yours, Hastings." Grant me patience. I shall run distracted! My rage chokes me.

Miss Neville. I hope, madam, you'll suspend your resentment for a few moments, and not impute to me any impertinence or sinister design that belongs to another.

Mrs. Hard. [*Curtseying very low.*] Fine spoken, madam; you are most miraculously polite and engaging,

and quite the very pink of courtesy and circumspection, madam. [*Changing her tone.*] And you, you great ill-fashioned oaf, with scarce sense enough to keep your mouth shut. Were you, too, joined against me? But I'll defeat all your plots in a moment. As for you, madam, since you have got a pair of fresh horses ready, it would be cruel to disappoint them. So, if you please, instead of running away with your spark, prepare, this very moment, to run off with *me*. Your old aunt Pedigree will keep you secure, I'll warrant me. You, too, sir, may mount your horse and guard us upon the way. Here, Thomas, Roger, Diggory, I'll show you that I wish you better than you do yourselves. [*Exit.*

Miss Neville. So now I'm completely ruined.

Tony. Ay, that's a sure thing.

Miss Neville. What better could be expected from being connected with such a stupid fool, and after all the nods and signs I made him.

Tony. By the laws, miss, it was your own cleverness, and not my stupidity, that did your business. You were so nice and busy with your Shake-bags and Goose-greens, that I thought you could never be making believe.

Enter HASTINGS.

Hastings. So, sir, I find by my servant, that you have shown my letter and betrayed us. Was this well done, young gentleman?

Tony. Here's another. Ask miss there who betrayed you. Ecod, it was her doing, not mine.

Enter MARLOW.

Marlow. So I have been finely used here among you. Rendered contemptible, driven into ill manners, despised, insulted, laughed at.

Tony. Here's another. We shall have old Bedlam broke loose presently.

Miss Neville. And there, sir, is the gentleman to whom we all owe every obligation.

Marlow. What can I say to him? a mere boy, an idiot, whose ignorance and age are a protection.

Hastings. A poor, contemptible booby, that would but disgrace correction.

Miss Neville. Yet with cunning and malice enough to make himself merry with all our embarrassments.

Hastings. An insensible cub.

Marlow. Replete with tricks and mischief.

Tony. Baw! damme, but I'll fight you both, one after the other,——with baskets.

Marlow. As for him, he's below resentment. But your conduct, Mr. Hastings, requires an explanation. You knew of my mistakes, yet would not undeceive me.

Hastings. Tortured as I am with my own disappointments, is this a time for explanations? It is not friendly, Mr. Marlow.

Marlow. But, sir——

Miss Neville. Mr. Marlow, we never kept on your mistake, till it was too late to undeceive you. Be pacified.

Enter SERVANT.

Servant. My mistress desires you'll get ready immediately, madam. The horses are putting to. Your hat and things are in the next room. We are to go thirty miles before morning. [*Exit Servant.*

Miss Neville. Well, well; I'll come presently.

Marlow [*To Hastings*]. Was it well done, sir, to assist in rendering me ridiculous? To hang me out for the scorn of all my acquaintance? Depend upon it, sir, I shall expect an explanation.

Hastings. Was it well done, sir, if you're upon that

subject, to deliver what I entrusted to yourself to the care of another, sir?

Miss Neville. Mr. Hastings. Mr. Marlow. Why will you increase my distress by this groundless dispute? I implore, I entreat you——

Enter SERVANT.

Servant. Your cloak, madam. My mistress is impatient.

Miss Neville. I come. Pray be pacified. If I leave you thus, I shall die with apprehension!

Enter SERVANT.

Servant. Your fan, muff, and gloves, madam. The horses are waiting.

Miss Neville. O, Mr. Marlow! if you knew what a scene of constraint and ill-nature lies before me, I'm sure it would convert your resentment into pity.

Marlow. I'm so distracted with a variety of passions that I don't know what I do. Forgive me, madam. George, forgive me. You know my hasty temper and should not exasperate it.

Hastings. The torture of my situation is my only excuse.

Miss Neville. Well, my dear Hastings, if you have that esteem for me that I think, that I am sure you have, your constancy for three years will but increase the happiness of our future connection. If——

Mrs. Hard. [*Within.*] Miss Neville. Constance, why, Constance, I say.

Miss Neville. I'm coming. Well, constancy. Remember, constancy is the word. [*Exit.*

Hastings. My heart! How can I support this? To be so near happiness, and such happiness!

Marlow [*To Tony*]. You see now, young gentleman, the effects of your folly. What might be amusement to you is here disappointment, and even distress.

Tony [*From a reverie*]. Ecod, I have hit it. It's here. Your hands. Yours and yours, my poor Sulky. My boots there, ho! Meet me two hours hence at the bottom of the garden; and if you don't find Tony Lumpkin a more good-natur'd fellow than you thought for, I'll give you leave to take my best horse and Bet Bouncer into the bargain! Come along. My boots, ho!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V

SCENE—*Continues*

Enter HASTINGS *and* SERVANT

Hastings. You saw the old lady and Miss Neville drive off, you say?

Servant. Yes, your honour. They went off in a post-coach, and the young 'Squire went on horseback. They're thirty miles off by this time.

Hastings. Then all my hopes are over.

Servant. Yes, sir. Old Sir Charles is arrived. He and the old gentleman of the house have been laughing at Mr. Marlow's mistake this half hour. They are coming this way.

Hastings. Then I must not be seen. So now to my fruitless appointment at the bottom of the garden. This is about the time. [*Exit.*

Enter SIR CHARLES *and* HARDCASTLE.

Hard. Ha! ha! ha! The peremptory tone in which he sent forth his sublime commands.

Sir Charles. And the reserve with which I suppose he treated all your advances.

Hard. And yet he might have seen something in me above a common innkeeper, too.

Sir Charles. Yes, Dick, but he mistook you for an uncommon innkeeper, ha! ha! ha!

Hard. Well, I'm in too good spirits to think of anything but joy. Yes, my dear friend, this union of our

families will make our personal friendships hereditary: and though my daughter's fortune is but small——

Sir Charles. Why, Dick, will you talk of fortune to *me?* My son is possessed of more than a competence already, and can want nothing but a good and virtuous girl to share his happiness and increase it. If they like each other, as you say they do——

Hard. If, man! I tell you they *do* like each other. My daughter as good as told me so.

Sir Charles. But girls are apt to flatter themselves, you know.

Hard. I saw him grasp her hand in the warmest manner myself; and here he comes to put you out of your *ifs,* I warrant him.

Enter MARLOW.

Marlow. I come, sir, once more, to ask pardon for my strange conduct. I can scarce reflect on my insolence without confusion.

Hard. Tut, boy, a trifle. You take it too gravely. An hour or two's laughing with my daughter will set all to rights again. She'll never like you the worse for it.

Marlow. Sir, I shall be always proud of her approbation.

Hard. Approbation is but a cold word, Mr. Marlow; if I am not deceived, you have something more than approbation thereabouts. You take me.

Marlow. Really, sir, I have not that happiness.

Hard. Come, boy, I'm an old fellow, and know what's what, as well as you that are younger. I know what has past between you; but mum.

Marlow. Sure, sir, nothing has past between us but the most profound respect on my side, and the most distant reserve on hers. You don't think, sir, that my

impudence has been past upon all the rest of the family.

Hard. Impudence! No, I don't say that—Not quite impudence—Though girls like to be played with, and rumpled a little too, sometimes. But she has told no tales, I assure you.

Marlow. I never gave her the slightest cause.

Hard. Well, well, I like modesty in its place well enough. But this is over-acting, young gentleman. You *may* be open. Your father and I will like you the better for it.

Marlow. May I die, sir, if I ever——

Hard. I tell you, she don't dislike you; and as I'm sure you like her——

Marlow. Dear sir—I protest, sir——

Hard. *I* see no reason why you should not be joined as fast as the parson can tie you.

Marlow. But hear me, sir——

Hard. Your father approves the match, I admire it, every moment's delay will be doing mischief, so——

Marlow. But why won't you hear me. By all that's just and true, I never gave Miss Hardcastle the slightest mark of my attachment, or even the most distant hint to suspect me of affection. We had but one interview, and that was formal, modest, and uninteresting.

Hard. [*Aside.*] This fellow's formal modest impudence is beyond bearing.

Sir Charles. And you never grasped her hand, or made any protestations!

Marlow. As heaven is my witness, I came down in obedience to your commands. I saw the lady without emotion, and parted without reluctance. I hope you'll exact no further proofs of my duty, nor prevent me from leaving a house in which I suffer so many mortifications. [*Exit.*

Sir Charles. I'm astonished at the air of sincerity with which he parted.

Hard. And I'm astonished at the deliberate intrepidity of his assurance.

Sir Charles. I dare pledge my life and honour upon his truth.

Hard. Here comes my daughter, and I would stake my happiness upon her veracity.

Enter Miss Hardcastle.

Hard. Kate, come hither, child. Answer us sincerely and without reserve: has Mr. Marlow made you any professions of love and affection?

Miss Hard. The question is very abrupt, sir! But since you require unreserved sincerity, I think he has.

Hard. [*To Sir Charles.*] You see.

Sir Charles. And pray, madam, have you and my son had more than one interview?

Miss Hard. Yes, sir, several.

Hard. [*To Sir Charles.*] You see.

Sir Charles. But did he profess any attachment?

Miss Hard. A lasting one.

Sir Charles. Did he talk of love?

Miss Hard. Much, sir.

Sir Charles. Amazing! And all this formally?

Miss Hard. Formally.

Hard. Now, my friend, I hope you are satisfied.

Sir Charles. And how did he behave, madam?

Miss Hard. As most professed admirers do. Said some civil things of my face, talked much of his want of merit, and the greatness of mine; mentioned his heart, gave a short tragedy speech, and ended with pretended rapture.

Sir Charles. Now I'm perfectly convinced, indeed. I know his conversation among women to be modest and submissive. This forward, canting, ranting manner by

no means describes him, and I am confident he never sat for the picture.

Miss Hard. Then what, sir, if I should convince you to your face of my sincerity? If you and my papa, in about half-an-hour, will place yourselves behind that screen, you shall hear him declare his passion to me in person.

Sir Charles. Agreed. And if I find him what you describe, all my happiness in him must have an end.

[*Exit.*

Miss Hard. And if you don't find him what I describe—I fear my happiness must never have a beginning.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE. *Changes to the back of the Garden.*

Enter HASTINGS.

Hastings. What an idiot am I, to wait here for a fellow, who probably takes a delight in mortifying me. He never intended to be punctual, and I'll wait no longer. What do I see? It is he, and perhaps with news of my Constance.

Enter TONY, *booted and spattered.*

Hastings. My honest 'Squire. I now find you a man of your word. This looks like friendship.

Tony. Ay, I'm your friend, and the best friend you have in the world, if you knew but all. This riding by night, by-the-bye, is cursedly tiresome. It shook me worse than the basket of a stage-coach.

Hastings. But how? Where did you leave your fellow-travellers? Are they in safety? Are they housed?

Tony. Five and twenty miles in two hours and a half is no such bad driving. The poor beasts have smoked

for it: Rabbit me, but I'd rather ride forty miles after a fox than ten with such *varmint.*

Hastings. Well, but where have you left the ladies? I die with impatience.

Tony. Left them? Why, where should I leave them but where I found them?

Hastings. This is a riddle.

Tony. Riddle me this, then. What's that goes round the house, and round the house, and never touches the house?

Hastings. I'm still astray.

Tony. Why, that's it, mon. I have led them astray. By jingo, there's not a pond or slough within five miles of the place but they can tell the taste of.

Hastings. Ha, ha, ha, I understand; you took them in a round, while they supposed themselves going forward. And so you have at last brought them home again?

Tony. You shall hear. I first took them down Feather-Bed Lane, where we stuck fast in the mud. I then rattled them crack over the stones of Up-and-down Hill—I then introduced them to the gibbet on Heavy-Tree Heath, and from that, with a circumbendibus, I fairly lodged them in the horsepond at the bottom of the garden.

Hastings. But no accident, I hope.

Tony. No, no. Only mother is confoundedly frightened. She thinks herself forty miles off. She's sick of the journey, and the cattle can scarce crawl. So, if your own horses be ready, you may whip off with cousin, and I'll be bound that no soul here can budge a foot to follow you.

Hastings. My dear friend, how can I be grateful?

Tony. Ay, now it's dear friend, noble 'Squire. Just now, it was all idiot, cub, and run me through the guts. Damn *your* way of fighting, I say. After we take a

knock in this part of the country we kiss and be friends. But if you had run me through the guts, then I should be dead, and you might go kiss the hangman.

Hastings. The rebuke is just. But I must hasten to relieve Miss Neville; if you keep the old lady employed, I promise to take care of the young one. [*Exit Hastings.*

Tony. Never fear me. Here she comes. Vanish. She's got from the pond, and draggled up to the waist like a mermaid.

Enter MRS. HARDCASTLE.

Mrs. Hard. Oh, Tony, I'm killed. Shook. Battered to death. I shall never survive it. That last jolt that laid us against the quickset hedge has done my business.

Tony. Alack, mamma, it was all your own fault. You would be for running away by night, without knowing one inch of the way.

Mrs. Hard. I wish we were at home again. I never met so many accidents in so short a journey. Drenched in the mud, overturned in a ditch, stuck fast in a slough, jolted to a jelly, and at last to lose our way! Whereabouts do you think we are, Tony?

Tony. By my guess we should be upon Crackskull Common, about forty miles from home.

Mrs. Hard. O lud! O lud! the most notorious spot in all the country. We only want a robbery to make a complete night on't.

Tony. Don't be afraid, mamma, don't be afraid. Two of the five that kept here are hanged, and the other three may not find us. Don't be afraid. Is that a man that's galloping behind us? No; it's only a tree. Don't be afraid.

Mrs. Hard. The fright will certainly kill me.

Tony. Do you see anything like a black hat moving behind the thicket?

Mrs. Hard. O death!

Tony. No, it's only a cow. Don't be afraid, mamma, don't be afraid.

Mrs. Hard. As I'm alive, Tony, I see a man coming towards us. Ah! I'm sure on't. If he perceives us, we are undone.

Tony. [*Aside.*] Father-in-law, by all that's unlucky, come to take one of his night walks. [*To her.*] Ah, it's a highwayman, with pistols as long as my arm. A damned ill-looking fellow.

Mrs. Hard. Good heaven defend us! He approaches.

Tony. Do you hide yourself in that thicket, and leave me to manage him. If there be any danger I'll cough and cry hem. When I cough be sure to keep close.

[*Mrs. Hardcastle hides behind a tree in the back scene.*

Enter HARDCASTLE.

Hard. I'm mistaken, or I heard voices of people in want of help. Oh, Tony, is that you? I did not expect you so soon back. Are your mother and her charge in safety?

Tony. Very safe, sir, at my aunt Pedigree's. Hem.

Mrs. Hard. [*From behind.*] Ah! I find there's danger.

Hard. Forty miles in three hours; sure, that's too much, my youngster.

Tony. Stout horses and willing minds make short journeys, as they say. Hem.

Mrs. Hard. [*From behind.*] Sure he'll do the dear boy no harm.

Hard. But I heard a voice here; I should be glad to know from whence it came?

Tony. It was I, sir, talking to myself, sir. I was saying that forty miles in four hours was very good going. Hem. As to be sure it was. Hem. I have got

a sort of cold by being out in the air. We'll go in if you please. Hem.

Hard. But if you talked to yourself, you did not answer yourself. I am certain I heard two voices, and am resolved [*raising his voice*] to find the other out.

Mrs. Hard. [*From behind.*] Oh! he's coming to find me out. Oh!

Tony. What need you go, sir, if I tell you? Hem. I'll lay down my life for the truth—hem—I'll tell you all, sir. [*Detaining him.*

Hard. I tell you I will not be detained. I insist on seeing. It's in vain to expect I'll believe you.

Mrs. Hard. [*Running forward from behind.*] O lud, he'll murder my poor boy, my darling. Here, good gentleman, whet your rage upon me. Take my money, my life, but spare that young gentleman, spare my child, if you have any mercy.

Hard. My wife! as I'm a Christian. From whence can she come, or what does she mean?

Mrs. Hard. [*Kneeling.*] Take compassion on us, good Mr. Highwayman. Take our money, our watches, all we have, but spare our lives. We will never bring you to justice, indeed we won't, good Mr. Highwayman.

Hard. I believe the woman's out of her senses. What, Dorothy, don't you know *me?*

Mrs. Hard. Mr. Hardcastle, as I'm alive! My fears blinded me. But who, my dear, could have expected to meet you here, in this frightful place, so far from home. What has brought you to follow us?

Hard. Sure, Dorothy, you have not lost your wits! So far from home, when you are within forty yards of your own door. [*To him.*] This is one of your old tricks, you graceless rogue, you! [*To her.*] Don't you know the gate, and the mulberry-tree; and don't you remember the horsepond, my dear?

Mrs. Hard. Yes, I shall remember the horsepond as

long as I live; I have caught my death in it. [*To Tony.*] And is it to you, you graceless varlet, I owe all this? I'll teach you to abuse your mother, I will.

Tony. Ecod, mother, all the parish says you have spoiled me, and so you may take the fruits on't.

Mrs. Hard. I'll spoil you, I will.

[*Follows him off the stage. Exit.*

Hard. There's morality, however, in his reply. [*Exit.*

Enter HASTINGS *and* MISS NEVILLE.

Hastings. My dear Constance, why will you deliberate thus? If we delay a moment, all is lost for ever. Pluck up a little resolution, and we shall soon be out of the reach of her malignity.

Miss Neville. I find it impossible. My spirits are so sunk with the agitations I have suffered that I am unable to face any new danger. Two or three years' patience will at last crown us with happiness.

Hastings. Such a tedious delay is worse than inconstancy. Let us fly, my charmer. Let us date our happiness from this very moment. Perish fortune. Love and content will increase what we possess beyond a monarch's revenue. Let me prevail.

Miss Neville. No, Mr. Hastings, no. Prudence once more comes to my relief, and I will obey its dictates. In a moment of passion, fortune may be despised, but it ever produces a lasting repentance. I'm resolved to apply to Mr. Hardcastle's compassion and justice for redress.

Hastings. But though he had the will, he has not the power to relieve you.

Miss Neville. But he has influence, and upon that I am resolved to rely.

Hastings. I have no hopes. But since you persist. I must reluctantly obey you. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE—*Changes.*

Enter SIR CHARLES *and* MISS HARDCASTLE.

Sir Charles. What a situation am I in! If what you say appears, I shall then find a guilty son. If what he says be true, I shall then lose one that, of all others, I most wished for a daughter.

Miss Hard. I am proud of your approbation; and, to show I merit it, if you place yourselves as I directed, you shall hear his explicit declaration. But he comes.

Sir Charles. I'll to your father, and keep him to the appointment. [*Exit Sir Charles.*

Enter MARLOW.

Marlow. Though prepared for setting out, I come once more to take leave, nor did I, till this moment, know the pain I feel in the separation.

Miss Hard. [*In her own natural manner.*] I believe sufferings cannot be very great, sir, which you can so easily remove. A day or two longer, perhaps, might lessen your uneasiness, by showing the little value of what you think proper to regret.

Marlow. [*Aside.*] This girl every moment improves upon me. [*To her.*] It must not be, madam. I have already trifled too long with my heart. My very pride begins to submit to my passion. The disparity of education and fortune, the anger of a parent, and the contempt of my equals, begin to lose their weight; and nothing can restore me to myself but this painful effort of resolution.

Miss Hard. Then go, sir. I'll urge nothing more to detain you. Though my family be as good as hers you came down to visit, and my education, I hope, not inferior, what are these advantages without equal af-

fluence? I must remain contented with the slight approbation of imputed merit; I must have only the mockery of your addresses, while all your serious aims are fixed on fortune.

Enter HARDCASTLE *and* SIR CHARLES *from behind.*

Sir Charles. Here, behind this screen.

Hard. Ay, ay, make no noise. I'll engage my Kate covers him with confusion at last.

Marlow. By heavens, madam, fortune was ever my smallest consideration. Your beauty at first caught my eye; for who could see that without emotion? But every moment that I converse with you, steals in some new grace, heightens the picture, and gives it stronger expression. What at first seemed rustic plainness now appears refined simplicity. What seemed forward assurance now strikes me as the result of courageous innocence and conscious virtue.

Sir Charles. What can it mean? He amazes me!

Hard. I told you how it would be. Hush!

Marlow. I am now determined to stay, madam, and I have too good an opinion of my father's discernment, when he sees you, to doubt his approbation.

Miss Hard. No, Mr. Marlow, I will not, cannot detain you. Do you think I could suffer a connexion in which there is the smallest room for repentance? Do you think I would take the mean advantage of a transient passion, to load you with confusion? Do you think I could ever relish that happiness which was acquired by lessening yours?

Marlow. By all that's good, I can have no happiness but what's in your power to grant me. Nor shall I ever feel repentance, but in not having seen your merits before. I will stay, even contrary to your wishes; and though you should persist to shun me, I will make my

respectful assiduities atone for the levity of my past conduct.

Miss Hard. Sir, I must entreat you'll desist. As our acquaintance began, so let it end, in indifference. I might have given an hour or two to levity; but seriously, Mr. Marlow, do you think I could ever submit to a connexion where *I* must appear mercenary, and *you* imprudent? Do you think I could ever catch at the confident addresses of a secure admirer?

Marlow. [*Kneeling.*] Does this look like security? Does this look like confidence? No, madam, every moment that shows me your merit only serves to increase my diffidence and confusion. Here let me continue——

Sir Charles. I can hold it no longer. Charles, Charles, how hast thou deceived me! Is this your indifference, your uninteresting conversation?

Hard. Your cold contempt! your formal interview! What have you to say now?

Marlow. That I'm all amazement! What can it mean?

Hard. It means that you can say and unsay things at pleasure. That you can address a lady in private, and deny it in public; that you have one story for us, and another for my daughter!

Marlow. Daughter!—this lady your daughter!

Hard. Yes, sir, my only daughter. My Kate; whose else should she be?

Marlow. Oh, the devil!

Miss Hard. Yes, sir, that very identical tall, squinting lady you were pleased to take me for. [*Curtseying.*] She that you addressed as the mild, modest, sentimental man of gravity, and the bold, forward, agreeable Rattle of the ladies' club: ha, ha, ha.

Marlow. Zounds, there's no bearing this; it's worse than death!

Miss Hard. In which of your characters, sir, will you

give us leave to address you? As the faltering gentleman, with looks on the ground, that speaks just to be heard, and hates hypocrisy: or the loud, confident creature, that keeps it up with Mrs. Mantrap, and old Miss Biddy Buckskin, till three in the morning; ha, ha, ha!

Marlow. O, curse on my noisy head. I never attempted to be impudent yet that I was not taken down. I must be gone.

Hard. By the hand of my body, but you shall not. I see it was all a mistake, and I am rejoiced to find it. You shall not, sir, I tell you. I know she'll forgive you. Won't you forgive him, Kate? We'll all forgive you. Take courage, man.

[*They retire; she tormenting him to the back scene.*

Enter MRS. HARDCASTLE *and* TONY.

Mrs. Hard. So, so, they're gone off. Let them go, I care not.

Hard. Who gone?

Mrs. Hard. My dutiful niece and her gentleman, Mr. Hastings, from town. He who came down with our modest visitor, here.

Sir Charles. Who, my honest George Hastings? As worthy a fellow as lives, and the girl could not have made a more prudent choice.

Hard. Then, by the hand of my body, I'm proud of the connexion.

Mrs. Hard. Well, if he has taken away the lady, he has not taken her fortune; that remains in this family to console us for her loss.

Hard. Sure, Dorothy, you would not be so mercenary?

Mrs. Hard. Ay, that's my affair, not yours. But you know if your son, when of age, refuses to marry his cousin, her whole fortune is then at her own disposal.

Hard. Ah, but he's not of age, and she has not thought proper to wait for his refusal.

Enter HASTINGS *and* MISS NEVILLE.

Mrs. Hard. [*Aside.*] What! returned so soon? I begin not to like it.

Hastings [*To Hardcastle*]. For my late attempt to fly off with your niece let my present confusion be my punishment. We are now come back to appeal from your justice to your humanity. By her father's consent I first paid her my addresses, and our passions were first founded in duty.

Miss Neville. Since his death I have been obliged to stoop to dissimulation to avoid oppression. In an hour of levity I was ready even to give up my fortune to secure my choice. But I'm now recovered from the delusion, and hope from your tenderness what is denied me from a nearer connexion.

Mrs. Hard. Pshaw, pshaw! this is all but the whining end of a modern novel.

Hard. Be it what it will, I'm glad they're come back to reclaim their due. Come hither, Tony, boy. Do you refuse this lady's hand whom I now offer you?

Tony. What signifies my refusing? You know I can't refuse her till I'm of age, father.

Hard. While I thought concealing your age, boy, was likely to conduce to your improvement, I concurred with your mother's desire to keep it secret. But since I find she turns it to a wrong use, I must now declare you have been of age these three months.

Tony. Of age! Am I of age, father?

Hard. Above three months.

Tony. Then you'll see the first use I'll make of my liberty. [*Taking Miss Neville's hand.*] Witness all men by these presents, that I, Anthony Lumpkin, Esquire,

of BLANK place, refuse you, Constantia Neville, spinster, of no place at all, for my true and lawful wife. So Constance Neville may marry whom she pleases, and Tony Lumpkin is his own man again!

Sir Charles. O brave 'Squire!

Hastings. My worthy friend!

Mrs. Hard. My undutiful offspring!

Marlow. Joy, my dear George, I give you joy, sincerely. And could I prevail upon my little tyrant here to be less arbitrary, I should be the happiest man alive, if you would return me the favour.

Hastings [*To Miss Hardcastle*]. Come, madam, you are now driven to the very last scene of all your contrivances. I know you like him, I'm sure he loves you, and you must and shall have him.

Hard. [*Joining their hands.*] And I say so, too. And Mr. Marlow, if she makes as good a wife as she has a daughter, I don't believe you'll ever repent your bargain. So now to supper; to-morrow we shall gather all the poor of the parish about us, and the Mistakes of the Night shall be crowned with a merry morning; so boy, take her; and as you have been mistaken in the mistress, my wish is, that you may never be mistaken in the wife.

GENERAL INDEX OF AUTHORS

GENERAL INDEX OF AUTHORS

	VOL.	PAGE
ADEE, ALVEY A.		
Life Magnet, The	15	63
ALLINGHAM, WILLIAM		
Fairies, The	6	285
ANDERSEN, HANS CHRISTIAN		
Daisy, The	6	237
Fir Tree, The	6	257
"ARABIAN NIGHTS"		
Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp	12	125
Forty Thieves, The	12	179
Three Calenders, The	12	249
BALZAC, HONORÉ DE		
Colonel Chabert	19	249
La Grande Breteche	19	23
BARRIE, JAMES M.		
Mending the Clock	18	107
BECKE, LOUIS		
At a Kava Drinking	16	234
Feast at Pentecost, The	16	250
Ninia	16	214
Rangers of the Tia Kau, The	16	209
BECKFORD, WILLIAM		
History of the Caliph Vathek	12	9
BIBLE, THE		
David and Goliath	3	99
Paul, the Christian	3	207
Story of Ruth, The	13	41

	VOL.	PAGE
BROWNING, ROBERT		
Hervé Riel	3	77
Pied Piper of Hamelin, The	6	245
BURNS, ROBERT		
Tam O'Shanter	18	307
CARROLL, LEWIS		
Through the Looking Glass	6	55
CHAPMAN, GEORGE		
Bussy D'Ambois	3	155
CHATTERTON, THOMAS		
Bristowe Tragedy	3	137
COLERIDGE, SAMUEL TAYLOR		
Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The	5	249
CONINGTON, JOHN		
Hercules and Cacus	17	231
COWPER, WILLIAM		
Diverting History of John Gilpin, The	18	47
COX, REV. G. W.		
Apollo	17	187
City of Pallas Athene, The	17	237
Prometheus	17	213
Sleep of Endymion, The	17	240
Tantalos	17	243
Toils of Herakles, The	17	223
CRAIK, DIANA MARIA MULOCK		
Kong Tolv	6	11
DANA, RICHARD HENRY		
Rounding Cape Horn	2	173
DAUDET, ALPHONSE		
La Belle Nivernaise	10	93
Lighthouse at the Sanguinaires, The	13	173

	VOL.	PAGE
DE BERARD, F. B.		
Baldur the Beautiful	17	245
How They Took the Kashmir Bastion	3	123
DE FOREST, J. W.		
Inspired Lobbyist, An	18	59
DICKENS, CHARLES		
Child's Dream of a Star, A	13	37
Cricket on the Hearth, The	13	179
Long Voyage, The	19	235
DOYLE, SIR FRANCIS HASTINGS		
Red Thread of Honor, The	3	109
DRAKE, JOSEPH RODMAN		
Culprit Fay, The	6	31
DUMAS, ALEXANDER		
Minions and the Angevins, The	3	159
EDGEWORTH, MARIA		
Murad the Unlucky	12	207
EDWARDS, AMELIA B.		
Four-Fifteen Express, The	15	213
Service of Danger, A	1	101
FERGUSON, SAMUEL		
Father Tom and the Pope	18	9
FOUQUÉ, BARON DE LA MOTTE		
Sintram	4	147
Undine	4	9
FROISSART, SIR JOHN		
How the Count's Son Died	10	151
FROUDE, JAMES ANTHONY		
Cæsar at Alesia	1	91
GILBERT, W. S.		
Yarn of the "Nancy Bell," The	2	241

	VOL.	PAGE
GOLDSMITH, OLIVER		
She Stoops to Conquer	20	361
HAGGARD, H. RIDER		
In the Land of the Masai	1	131
HALE, EDWARD EVERETT		
Man Without a Country, The	19	153
HALEVY, LUDOVIC		
Love Marriage, A	13	79
HALLECK, FITZ-GREEN		
Marco Bozzaris	3	113
HAY, JOHN		
Jim Bludso	3	118
HOMER		
Iliad, The	7	11
Odyssey, The	9	11
HOOD, THOMAS		
Song of the Shirt, The	19	187
HOUSMAN, CLEMENCE		
Were-Wolf, The	5	157
HOWITT, MARY		
Isles of the Sea Fairies, The	6	276
HUGO, VICTOR		
Cosette	10	161
Escape of the Cannon, The	2	161
Friends of the Abaissé, The	3	35
King and the Bishop, The	19	9
Waterloo	1	11
IRVING, WASHINGTON		
Columbus: The Great Voyage	3	86
Devil and Tom Walker, The	15	47
Downfall of the Moors, The	1	237
Legend of Sleepy Hollow, The	18	269
Rip Van Winkle	4	113

	VOL	PAGE
JEROME, JEROME K.		
Stage-Land	20	199
JOHNSTON, H. H.		
History of a Slave	16	41
KINGSLEY, CHARLES		
Argonauts, The	17	51
Perseus	17	11
Theseus	17	123
Water Babies, The	10	9
KIPLING, RUDYARD		
Drums of the Fore and Aft	1	49
In the House of the Suddhoo	14	59
LABOULAYE, EDOUARD		
Abdallah	14	79
LAMB, CHARLES		
Dream Children	13	49
LONGFELLOW, HENRY W.		
Paupukeewis	16	257
LOVER, SAMUEL		
Barny O'Reirdon, the Navigator	2	249
LYTTON, E. BULWER		
House and the Brain, The	5	9
MACAULAY, LORD		
Defence of Londonderry, The	3	247
Horatius	3	9
Ivry	1	125
MacGAHAN, J. A.		
Picture of War, A	1	211
MACKAY, CHARLES		
Kelpie of the Corrievreckan, The	6	280

	VOL.	PAGE
McNISH, DR. ROBERT		
Metempsychosis, The	15	9
MELVILLE, HERMAN		
Bell Tower, The	14	9
Captive Among Cannibals	16	171
Epic of the Whale, The	2	9
MILLER, JOAQUIN		
Columbus: The Port of Ships	3	85
MILTON, JOHN		
Revolt of Lucifer, The	1	189
MITCHELL, DONALD G.		
Reveries of a Bachelor	13	133
MITCHELL, EDWARD PAGE		
Tachypomp, The	18	117
MORRIS, WILLIAM		
Atalanta's Race	17	161
Haystack in the Floods, The	19	51
Writing on the Image, The	14	69
MORRISON, ARTHUR		
Tales of Mean Streets	19	59
O'BRIEN, FITZ-JAMES		
What Was It?	15	87
Wondersmith, The	5	203
OUIDA (LOUISA DE LA RAME)		
Dog of Flanders, A	10	217
PEMBROKE, EARL OF		
Real Shipwreck, A	2	215
PERCY, BISHOP		
Queen Mab's Invitation	6	271
Robin Goodfellow	6	273
PLATO		
Socrates, the Pagan	3	222

	VOL.	PAGE
READE, CHARLES		
Peg Woffington	20	9
Sea Thieves of Sulu, The	2	133
RUSKIN, JOHN		
King of the Golden River, The	14	29
RUSSELL, WILLIAM HOWARD		
Balaklava	1	39
SCOTT, SIR WALTER		
Battle of Beal' an Duine, The	1	181
Fate of Constance de Beverly, The	19	219
SCULLY, WILLIAM CHARLES		
Fundamental Axiom, The	19	193
Quest of the Copper, The	16	9
SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM		
Midsummer Night's Dream, A	6	163
SHERIDAN, RICHARD BRINSLEY		
Rivals, The	20	267
SMITH, ALEXANDER		
Dreamthorp	13	157
STERNE, LAURENCE		
Story of LeFevre, The	13	281
STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS		
Bottle Imp, The	14	239
Lodging for the Night, A	11	215
Markheim	5	135
Sire De Malétroit's Door, The	11	189
Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	5	87
SWETTENHAM, F. A.		
Passing of Penglima Prang Semaun, The	16	149

	VOL.	PAGE
TENNYSON, ALFRED, LORD		
Charge of the Light Brigade, The	3	107
Coming of Arthur, The	4	133
Passing of Arthur, The	4	293
THORNBURY, WALTER		
Cavalier's Escape, The	3	116
TOLSTOY, COUNT LYOF N.		
What Makes People to Live	13	9
VIRGIL		
Æneid, The	8	11
WATSON, H. B. MARRIOTT		
Skirts of Chance, The	18	137
WELLS, H. G.		
Time Machine, The	15	205
WEYMAN, STANLEY J.		
House of the Wolf, The	11	9
WILSON, JOHN		
Fairies, The	6	287
Snow Storm, The	13	113
YONGE, CHARLOTTE M.		
Agostina of Zaragoza	3	237
ZSCHOKKE, HEINRICH		
Broken Cup, The	13	55

GENERAL INDEX OF SUBJECTS

GENERAL INDEX OF SUBJECTS

PAGE

BARBARIANS AND SAVAGES . Vol. XVI

Quest of the Copper, The *W. C. Scully* 9
History of a Slave . . *H. H. Johnston* 41
Passing of Penglima Prang Semaun, The *F. A. Swettenham* 145
Captive Among Cannibals *Herman Melville* 171
Rangers of the Tia Kau, The *Louis Becke* 209
Ninia . . . . . *Louis Becke* 214
At a Kava Drinking . . *Louis Becke* 234
Feast at Pentecost, The . *Louis Becke* 250
Paupukeewis . *Henry W. Longfellow* 257

BATTLE, CAMP AND SIEGE . . Vol. I

Waterloo . . . . *Victor Hugo* 11
Balaklava . . *William Howard Russell* 39
Drums of the Fore and Aft *R. Kipling* 49
Cæsar at Alesia . *James Anthony Froude* 91
Service of Danger, A *Amelia B. Edwards* 101
Ivry . . . . . *Lord Macaulay* 125
In the Land of the Masai *H. R. Haggard* 131
Battle of Beal' an Duine *Sir Walter Scott* 181
Revolt of Lucifer, The . . *John Milton* 189
Picture of War, A . *J. A. MacGahan* 211
Downfall of the Moors *Washington Irving* 237

CHILD STORIES . . . . Vol. X

Water Babies, The . *Charles Kingsley* 9
La Belle Nivernaise . *Alphonse Daudet* 93

PAGE

How the Count's Son Died *Sir J. Froissart* 151
Cosette . . . . . *Victor Hugo* 161
Dog of Flanders, A . . . *"Ouida"* 217

CLASSIC TALES . . . . Vol. VII
Iliad, The . . . . . *Homer* 11

CLASSIC TALES . . . . Vol. VIII
Æneid, The . . . . *Virgil* 11

CLASSIC TALES . . . . Vol. IX
Odyssey, The . . . . . *Homer* 11

COMEDY . . . . . Vol. XVIII
Father Tom and the Pope *Sam'l Ferguson* 9
Diverting History of John Gilpin
William Cowper 47
An Inspired Lobbyist . *J. W. de Forest* 59
Ghost Baby, The *Blackwood's Magazine* 81
Mending the Clock . . *J. M. Barrie* 107
Tachypomp, The . . *E. P. Mitchell* 117
Skirts of Chance, The *H. B. Marriott Watson* 137
Legend of Sleepy Hollow, The
Washington Irving 269
Tam O'Shanter . . *Robert Burns* 307

ENCHANTMENT . . . Vol. XIV
Bell Tower, The . . *Herman Melville* 9
King of the Golden River *John Ruskin* 29
In the House of Suddhoo *Rudyard Kipling* 59
Writing on the Image, The *William Morris* 69
Abdallah . . . *Edouard Laboulaye* 79
Bottle Imp, The *Robert Louis Stevenson* 239

FAIRYLAND AND FANCY . . Vol. VI
Kong Tolv . *Diana Maria Mulock Craik* 11
Culprit Fay, The *Joseph Rodman Drake* 31

PAGE

Through the Looking Glass. *Lewis Carroll* 55
Midsummer Night's Dream, A *Shakespeare* 163
Daisy, The . *Hans Christian Andersen* 237
Pied Piper of Hamelin *Robert Browning* 245
Fir Tree, The *Hans Christian Andersen* 257
Queen Mab's Invitation . *Bishop Percy* 271
Robin Goodfellow . . *Bishop Percy* 273
Isles of the Sea Fairies, The *Mary Howitt* 276
Kelpie of Corrievreckan *Charles Mackay* 280
Fairies, The . . *William Allingham* 285
———, The . . . *John Wilson* 287

GODS AND HEROES . . **Vol. XVII**

Perseus . . . . *Charles Kingsley* 11
Argonauts, The . . *Charles Kingsley* 51
Theseus . . . . *Charles Kingsley* 123
Atalanta's Race . . . *William Morris* 161
Apollo . . . . *Rev. G. W. Cox* 187
Prometheus . . . *Rev. G. W. Cox* 213
Toils of Herakles, The . *Rev. G. W. Cox* 223
Hercules and Cacus . *John Conington* 231
City of Pallas Athene, The *Rev. G. W. Cox* 237
Sleep of Endymion, The *Rev. G. W. Cox* 240
Tantalos . . . *Rev. G. W. Cox* 243
Baldur the Beautiful . *F. B. De Berard* 247

HEROISM . . . . . **Vol. III**

Horatius . . . . *Lord Macaulay* 9
Friends of the "Abaissé," The *Victor Hugo* 35
Hervé Riel . . . *Robert Browning* 77
Port of Ships, The . *Joaquin Miller* 85
Great Voyage, The *Washington Irving* 86
David and Goliath . *The Book of Kings* 99
Charge of the Light Brigade
Lord Tennyson 107

		PAGE
Red Thread of Honor	*Sir F. H. Doyle*	109
Marco Bozzaris .	*Fitz-Greene Halleck*	113
Cavalier's Escape, The	*Walter Thornbury*	116
Jim Bludso	*John Hay*	118
How They Took the Kashmir Bastion	*F. B. De Berard*	123
Bristowe Tragedy, The	*Thomas Chatterton*	137
Bussy D'Ambois . .	*George Chapman*	155
Minions and the Angevins	*Alex. Dumas*	159
Paul the Christian	*Acts of the Apostles*	207
Socrates the Pagan . . .	*Plato*	222
Agostina of Zaragoza	*Charlotte M. Yonge*	237
Defense of Londonderry	*Lord Macaulay*	247

OCCULT TALES . . . **Vol. XV**

Metempsychosis, The	*Dr. Robert McNish*	9
Devil and Tom Walker	*Washington Irving*	47
Life Magnet, The . .	*Alvey A. Adee*	63
What Was It? . .	*Fitz-James O'Brien*	87
Time Machine, The . .	*H. G. Wells*	105
Four-Fifteen Express, The	*A. B. Edwards*	213

OLDEN FRANCE . . . . **Vol. XI**

House of the Wolf, The	*Stanley J. Weyman*	9
Sire de Malétroit's Door, The	*Robert Louis Stevenson*	189
Lodging for the Night, A	*Robert Louis Stevenson*	215

ORIENT, THE . . . . . **Vol. XII**

Vathek	*William Beckford*	9
Aladdin . . .	*"The Arabian Nights"*	125
Forty Thieves, The	*"The Arabian Nights"*	179
Murad the Unlucky .	*Maria Edgeworth*	207
Three Calenders, The	*"The Arabian Nights"*	249

PAGE

PROSE IDYLS . . . . . Vol. XIII

What Makes People to Live *Count Lyof N. Tolstoi* 9
Child's Dream of a Star, A *Charles Dickens* 37
Story of Ruth, The . *The Book of Ruth* 41
Dream Children . . . *Charles Lamb* 49
Broken Cup, The . *Heinrich Zschokke* 55
Love Marriage, A . *Ludovic Halevy* 79
Snow Storm, The . . *John Wilson* 113
Reveries of a Bachelor *Donald G. Mitchell* 133
Dreamthorp . . . *Alexander Smith* 157
Lighthouse at the Sanguinaires *A. Daudet* 173
Cricket on the Hearth, The *Charles Dickens* 179
Story of Le Fevre, The *Laurence Sterne* 281

SEA, THE . . . . . Vol. II

Epic of the Whale, The *Herman Melville* 11
Sea Thieves of Sulu, The *Charles Reade* 133
Escape of the Cannon, The *Victor Hugo* 163
Rounding Cape Horn *Richard Henry Dana* 173
Real Shipwreck, A *The Earl of Pembroke* 215
Yarn of the "Nancy Bell" . *W. S. Gilbert* 243
Barny O'Reirdon, the Navigator *S. Lover* 249

STAGE, THE . . . . . Vol. XX

Peg Woffington . . *Charles Reade* 9
Stage-Land . . *Jerome K. Jerome* 199
Rivals, The *Richard Brinsley Sheridan* 267
She Stoops to Conquer *Oliver Goldsmith* 361

TRAGEDY . . . . . Vol. XIX

King and the Bishop, The *Victor Hugo* 9
La Grande Bretéche *Honoré de Balzac* 23
Haystack in the Floods, The *Wm. Morris* 57
Tales of Mean Streets *Arthur Morrison* 59

		PAGE
Man Without a Country, The	*E. E. Hale*	153
Song of the Shirt, The	*Thos. Hood*	187
Fundamental Axiom, The	*W. C. Scully*	193
Fate of Constance de Beverly, The	*Sir Walter Scott*	219
Long Voyage, The	*Charles Dickens*	235
Colonel Chabert	*Honoré de Balzac*	249

WEIRD TALES . . . . . **Vol. V**

House and the Brain	*E. Bulwer-Lytton*	9
Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	*R. L. Stevenson*	57
Markheim	*Robert Louis Stevenson*	135
Were-Wolf, The	*Clemence Housman*	157
Wondersmith, The	*Fitz-James O'Brien*	203
Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The	*S. T. Coleridge*	249

WONDER . . . . . **Vol. IV**

Undine	*Baron De La Motte Fouqué*	9
Rip Van Winkle	*Washington Irving*	113
Coming of Arthur, The	*Lord Tennyson*	133
Sintram	*Baron De La Motte Fouqué*	147
Passing of Arthur, The	*Lord Tennyson*	293

GENERAL INDEX OF SELECTIONS

GENERAL INDEX OF SELECTIONS

A		VOL.	PAGE
Abdallah	*Edouard Laboulaye*	14	79
Æneid of Virgil, The	*Cranch, Dryden, Conington and Morris*	8	11
Agostina of Zaragoza	*Charlotte M. Yonge*	3	237
Aladdin	*"Arabian Nights"*	12	125
Apollo	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	187
Arabian Nights		12	125
Argonauts, The	*Charles Kingsley*	17	51
Arthur, The Coming of	*Lord Tennyson*	4	133
———, The Passing of	*Lord Tennyson*	4	293
At a Kava Drinking	*Louis Becke*	16	234
Atalanta's Race	*William Morris*	17	161

B			
Balaklava	*William Howard Russell*	1	39
Baldur the Beautiful	*F. B. De Berard*	17	247
Ballads of Bravery	*Various*	3	107
Barny O'Reirdon	*Samuel Lover*	2	249
Battle of Beal' an Duine	*Sir Walter Scott*	1	181
Bell Tower, The	*Herman Melville*	14	9
Bludso, Jim	*John Hay*	3	118
Bottle Imp, The	*Robert Louis Stevenson*	14	239
Bristowe Tragedy	*Thomas Chatterton*	3	137
Broken Cup, The	*Heinrich Zschokke*	13	55
Bussy D'Ambois	*George Chapman*	3	155

C		VOL.	PAGE
Cæsar at Alesia	*James Anthony Froude*	1	91
Calenders, The Three	*"Arabian Nights"*	12	249
Captive Among Cannibals	*Herman Melville*	16	171
Cavalier's Escape, The	*Walter Thornbury*	3	116
Charge of the Light Brigade	*Lord Tennyson*	3	107
Child's Dream of a Star	*Charles Dickens*	13	37
City of Pallas Athene, The	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	237
Colonel Chabert	*Honoré de Balzac*	19	249
Columbus	*Joaquin Miller*	3	85
Coming of Arthur, The	*Lord Tennyson*	4	133
Cosette	*Victor Hugo*	10	161
Cricket on the Hearth	*Charles Dickens*	13	179
Culprit Fay, The	*Joseph Rodman Drake*	6	31

D			
Daisy, The	*Hans Christian Andersen*	6	237
David and Goliath	*The Book of Kings*	3	99
Defense of Londonderry	*Lord Macaulay*	3	247
Devil and Tom Walker	*Washington Irving*	15	47
Diverting History of John Gilpin, The	*William Cowper*	18	47
Dog of Flanders, A	*"Ouida"*	10	217
Downfall of the Moors	*Washington Irving*	1	237
Dream Children	*Charles Lamb*	13	49
Dreamthorp	*Alexander Smith*	13	157
Drums of the Fore and Aft	*R. Kipling*	1	49

E			
Endymion, The Sleep of	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	240
Epic of the Whale, The	*Herman Melville*	2	11
Escape of the Cannon, The	*Victor Hugo*	2	163

F		VOL.	PAGE
Fairies, The	*William Allingham*	6	285
———, The	*John Wilson*	6	287
Fate of Constance de Beverly, The	*Sir Walter Scott*	19	219
Father Tom and the Pope	*Samuel Ferguson*	18	9
Feast at Pentecost, The	*Louis Becke*	16	250
Fir Tree, The	*Hans Christian Andersen*	6	257
Forty Thieves, The	*"Arabian Nights"*	12	179
Four-Fifteen Express, The	*Amelia B. Edwards*	15	213
Friends of the Abaissé	*Victor Hugo*	3	35
Fundamental Axiom, The	*W. C. Scully*	19	193
G			
Ghost Baby, The	*Blackwood's Magazine*	18	81
Great Voyage, The	*Washington Irving*	3	86
H			
Haystack in the Floods, The	*William Morris*	19	51
Hercules	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	223
Hercules and Cacus	*John Conington*	17	231
Hervé Riel	*Robert Browning*	3	77
History of a Slave	*H. H. Johnston*	16	41
History of the Caliph Vathek	*W. Beckford*	12	9
Homer's Iliad		7	11
——— Odyssey		9	11
Horatius	*Lord Macaulay*	3	9
House and the Brain	*E. Bulwer-Lytton*	5	9
House of Suddhoo, In the	*Rudyard Kipling*	14	59
House of the Wolf, The	*Stanley J. Weyman*	11	9
How the Count's Son Died	*Sir J. Froissart*	10	151
How They Took the Kashmir Bastion	*F. B. De Berard*	3	123

I		VOL.	PAGE
Iliad of Homer, The	*Bryant, Chapman, Church, Derby and Pope*	7	11
Inspired Lobbyist, An	*J. W. de Forest*	18	59
In the House of Suddhoo	*Rudyard Kipling*	14	59
In the Land of the Masai	*H. R. Haggard*	1	131
In the South Seas	*Louis Becke*	16	209
Isles of the Sea Fairies, The	*Mary Howitt*	6	276
Ivry	*Lord Macaulay*	1	125
J			
Jim Bludso	*John Hay*	3	118
K			
Kava Drinking, At a	*Louis Becke*	16	234
Kelpie of Corrievreckan, The	*C. Mackay*	6	280
King and the Bishop, The	*Victor Hugo*	19	9
King of the Golden River	*John Ruskin*	14	29
Kong Tolv	*Diana Maria Mulock Craik*	6	11
L			
La Belle Nivernaise	*Alphonse Daudet*	10	93
La Grande Bretéche	*Honoré de Balzac*	19	23
Legend of Sleepy Hollow, The	*Washington Irving*	18	269
Life Magnet, The	*Alvey A. Adee*	15	63
Lighthouse of the Sanguinaires	*A. Daudet*	13	173
Lodging for the Night, A	*R. L. Stevenson*	11	215
Londonderry, Defense of	*Lord Macaulay*	3	247
Long Voyage, The	*Charles Dickens*	19	235
Love Marriage, A	*Ludovic Halevy*	13	79
M			
Man Without a Country, The	*Edward Everett Hale*	19	153
Marco Bozzaris	*Fitz-Greene Halleck*	3	113

		VOL.	PAGE
Markheim	*Robert Louis Stevenson*	5	135
Masai, In the Land of the	*H. Rider Haggard*	1	131
Mending the Clock	*J. M. Barrie*	18	107
Metempsychosis, The	*Dr. Robert McNish*	15	9
Midsummer Night's Dream, A	*Shakespeare*	6	163
Minions and the Angevins	*Alex. Dumas*	3	159
Murad the Unlucky	*Maria Edgeworth*	12	207
N			
Ninia	*Louis Becke*	16	214
O			
Odyssey of Homer, The	*Bryant, Chapman, Church, Cowper, Pope and Worsley*	9	11
O'Reirdon, Barny	*Samuel Lover*		249
P			
Pagan and Christian		3	207
Passing of Arthur, The	*Lord Tennyson*	4	293
Passing of Penglima Prang Semaun, The	*F. A. Swettenham*	16	145
Paul the Christian	*The Bible*	3	207
Paupukeewis	*Henry W. Longfellow*	16	257
Peg Woffington	*Charles Reade*	20	9
Perseus	*Charles Kingsley*	17	11
Picture of War, A	*J. A. MacGahan*	1	211
Pied Piper of Hamelin	*Robert Browning*	6	245
Port of Ships, The	*Joaquin Miller*	3	85
Prometheus	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	213
Q			
Queen Mab's Invitation	*Bishop Percy*	6	271
Quest of the Copper, The	*W. C. Scully*	16	9
R			
Rangers of the Tia Kau, The	*Louis Becke*	16	209
Real Shipwreck, A	*Earl of Pembroke*	2	215

		VOL.	PAGE
Red Thread of Honor	*Sir F. H. Doyle*	3	109
Reveries of a Bachelor	*Donald G. Mitchell*	13	133
Revolt of Lucifer, The	*John Milton*	1	189
Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The	*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*	5	249
Rip Van Winkle	*Washington Irving*	4	113
Rivals, The	*R. Brinsley Sheridan*	20	267
Robin Goodfellow	*Bishop Percy*	6	273
Rounding Cape Horn	*Richard Henry Dana*	2	173

S

Sea Thieves of Sulu, The	*Charles Reade*	2	133
Service of Danger, A	*Amelia B. Edwards*	1	101
She Stoops to Conquer	*Oliver Goldsmith*	20	361
Sintram	*Baron De La Motte Fouqué*	4	147
Sire de Malétroit's Door,	*R. L. Stevenson*	11	189
Skirts of Chance, The	*H. B. Marriott Watson*	18	137
Sleep of Endymion, The	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	240
Snow Storm, The	*John Wilson*	13	113
Socrates the Pagan	*Plato*	3	222
Song of the Shirt	*Thomas Hood*	19	187
Songs of the Fairies, The	*Various*	6	271
South Seas, In the	*Louis Becke*	16	209
Stage-Land	*Jerome K. Jerome*	20	199
Story of LeFevre, The	*Laurence Sterne*	13	281
Story of Ruth, The	*The Bible*	13	41
Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	*Robert Louis Stevenson*	5	57

T

Tachypomp, The	*Ed. P. Mitchell*	18	117
Tales of Ancient Greece	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	237
Tales of Mean Streets	*Arthur Morrison*	19	59
Tam O'Shanter	*Robert Burns*	18	307
Tantalos	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	243

		VOL.	PAGE
Theseus	*Charles Kingsley*	17	123
Three Calenders, The	*"The Arabian Nights"*	12	249
Through the Looking Glass	*Lewis Carroll*	6	55
Time Machine, The . .	*H. G. Wells*	15	105
Toils of Herakles, The .	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	223
Tragedy, Bristowe .	*Thomas Chatterton*	3	137
U			
Undine . .	*Baron De La Motte Fouqué*	4	9
V			
Vathek, History of the Caliph	*W. Beckford*	12	9
Virgil's Æneid		8	11
W			
Water Babies, The .	*Charles Kingsley*	10	9
Waterloo	*Victor Hugo*	1	11
Were-Wolf, The .	*Clemence Housman*	5	157
What Makes People to Live	*L. N. Tolstoi*	13	9
What Was It? . .	*Fitz-James O'Brien*	15	87
Wondersmith, The .	*Fitz-James O'Brien*	5	203
Writing on the Image .	*William Morris*	14	69
Y			
Yarn of the "Nancy Bell"	*Wm. S. Gilbert*	2	243

GENERAL SYNOPTICAL INDEX

GENERAL SYNOPTICAL INDEX

		VOL.	PAGE
A			
Abdallah	*Edouard Laboulaye*	14	iii
Æneid, The	*Virgil*	8	vii
Agostina of Zaragoza	*C. M. Yonge*	3	iii
Aladdin	*"Arabian Nights"*	12	iii
An Inspired Lobbyist	*J. W. De Forest*	18	iv
Apollo	*Revd. G. W. Cox*	17	iii
Argonauts, The	*Charles Kingsley*	17	vi
Arthur, The Coming of	*Lord Tennyson*	4	iv
———. The Passing of	*Lord Tennyson*	4	iv
At a Kava Drinking	*Louis Becke*	16	iii
Atalanta's Race	*William Morris*	17	iii
B			
Balaklava	*Wm. H. Russell*	1	xxxiii
Baldur the Beautiful	*F. B. De Berard*	17	iv
Barny O'Reirdon	*Samuel Lover*	2	iii
Battle of Beal' an Duine	*Sir W. Scott*	1	xxxiii
Bell Tower, The	*Herman Melville*	14	iv
Bottle Imp, The	*R. L. Stevenson*	14	iv
Bristowe Tragedy	*T. Chatterton*	3	v
Broken Cup, The	*H. Zschokke*	13	iv
Bussy D'Ambois	*George Chapman*	3	iv
C			
Cæsar at Alesia	*J. A. Froude*	1	xxxiv
Cavalier's Escape, The	*Walter Thornbury*	3	iv

		VOL.	PAGE
Charge of the Light Brigade, The	*Lord Tennyson*	3	
Captive Among Cannibals	*Herman Melville*	16	iii
Colonel Chabert .	*Honoré de Balzac*	19	vi
Cosette	*Victor Hugo*	10	iii
Culprit Fay, The .	*Joseph Rodman Drake*	6	iv
D			
Daisy, The .	*Hans Christian Andersen*	6	iv
David and Goliath .	*The Book of Judges*	3	vi
Defense of Londonderry	*Lord Macaulay*	3	viii
Devil and Tom Walker, The	*Washington Irving*	15	iii
Diverting History of John Gilpin	*William Cowper*	18	iii
Dog of Flanders, A . . .	*"Ouida"*	10	iii
Downfall of the Moors	*Washington Irving*	1	xxxiv
Drums of the Fore and Aft	*Rudyard Kipling*	1	xxxv
E			
Epic of the Whale, The	*Herman Melville*	2	iii
Escape of the Cannon, The	*Victor Hugo*	2	iv
F			
Fairies, The . .	*William Allingham*	6	iv
———, The . . .	*John Wilson*	6	iv
Fate of Constance de Beverly, The	*Sir Walter Scott*	19	v
Father Tom and the Pope	*Sam. Ferguson*	18	iii
Fir Tree, The	*Hans Christian Andersen*	6	v
Forty Thieves, The .	*"Arabian Nights"*	12	iv
Four-Fifteen Express, The	*Amelia B. Edwards*	15	iii
Friends of the Abaisse .	*Victor Hugo*	3	viii
Fundamental Axiom, The ..	*W. C. Scully*	19	v

		VOL.	PAGE
G			
Ghost Baby, The	*Blackwood's Magazine*	18	v
Great Voyage, The	*Washington Irving*	3	v
H			
Haystack in the Floods, The	*W. Morris*	19	iv
Hercules and Cacus	*John Conington*	17	iv
Hervé Riel	*Robert Browning*	3	vi
History of a Slave, The	*H. H. Johnson*	16	v
Horatius	*Lord Macaulay*	3	vi
House of the Brain, The	*Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton*	5	iv
House of the Wolf, The	*Stanley J. Weyman*	11	iii
How the Count's Son Died	*Sir John Froissart*	10	iv
How they took the Kashmir Bastion	*F. B. De Berard*	3	vii
I			
Iliad, The	*Homer*	7	vii
Inspired Lobbyist, An	*J. W. De Forest*	18	iv
In the House of Suddhoo	*Rudyard Kipling*	14	iii
In the South Seas	*Louis Becke*	16	iii
In the Land of the Masai	*H. Rider Haggard*	1	xxxv
Ivry	*Lord Macaulay*	1	xxxvi
J			
Jim Bludso	*John Hay*	3	iv
K			
King of the Golden River, The	*John Ruskin*	14	v
King and the Bishop, The	*Victor Hugo*	19	iii
Kong Tolv	*Dinah Maria Mulock Craik*	6	iii

L		VOL.	PAGE
La Belle Nivernaise	*Alphonse Daudet*	10	v
La Grande Bretéche	*Honoré de Balzac*	19	iii
Legend of Sleepy Hollow, The	*Washington Irving*	18	iv
Life Magnet, The	*Alvey A. Adee*	15	iii
Lodging for the Night, A	*R. L. Stevenson*	11	iii
Long Voyage, The	*Charles Dickens*	19	vi
M			
Man Without a Country	*Ed. Everett Hale*	19	v
Marco Bozzaris	*Fitz-Greene Halleck*	3	iii
Markheim	*R. L. Stevenson*	5	iv
Mending the Clock	*J. M. Barrie*	18	v
Metempsychosis	*Dr. Robert McNish*	15	iv
Midsummer Night's Dream	*William Shakespeare*	6	iii
Minions and the Angevins, The	*Alexandre Dumas*	3	iv
Murad the Unlucky	*Maria Edgeworth*	12	iii
O			
Odyssey, The	*Homer*	9	vii
P			
Passing of Penglima Prang Semaun	*F. A. Swettenham*	16	v
Paul the Christian	*Acts of the Apostles*	3	ix
Paupukeewis	*Henry W. Longfellow*	16	iv
Peg Woffington	*Charles Reade*	20	iv
Perseus	*Charles Kingsley*	17	iv
Picture of War, A	*J. A. MacGahan*	1	xxxvi
Pied Piper of Hamelin, The	*Robert Browning*	6	v
Port of Ships, The	*Joaquin Miller*	3	v
Prometheus	*Revd. G. W. Cox*	17	iv

Q		VOL.	PAGE
Quest of the Copper, The	*William C. Scully*	16	v
R			
Real Shipwreck, A	*Earl of Pembroke*	2	iii
Red Thread of Honor	*Sir Francis H. Doyle*	3	iii
Reveries of a Bachelor	*Donald G. Mitchell*	13	iv
Revolt of Lucifer, The	*John Milton*	1	xxxvii
Rime of the Ancient Mariner	*S. T. Coleridge*	5	v
Rip Van Winkle	*Washington Irving*	4	iii
Rivals, The	*Richard Brinsley Sheridan*	20	vii
Rounding Cape Horn	*Richd. Henry Dana*	2	v
Ruth, The Story of	*The Book of Ruth*	13	vi
S			
Sea Thieves of Sulu, The	*Charles Reade*	2	v
Service of Danger, A	*A. B. Edwards*	1	xxxviii
She Stoops to Conquer	*Oliver Goldsmith*	20	v
Sintram	*Baron De La Motte Fouqué*	4	iii
Sire De Malétroit's Door, The	*R. L. Stevenson*	11	iii
Skirts of Chance, The	*H. B. Marriott Watson*	18	vi
Socrates, the Pagan	*Plato*	3	ix
Song of the Shirt, The	*Thomas Hood*	19	v
Songs of the Fairies	*Various*	6	iv
Stage-Land	*Jerome K. Jerome*	20	ix
Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	*R. L. Stevenson*	5	iii
T			
Tachypomp, The	*Ed. P. Mitchell*	18	vi
Tales of Ancient Greece	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	v
Tales of Mean Streets	*Arthur Morrison*	19	iv
Tam O'Shanter	*Robert Burns*	18	v
Theseus	*Charles Kingsley*	17	vi

		VOL.	PAGE
Three Calenders, The	*"Arabian Nights"*	12	v
Through the Looking Glass	*Lewis Carroll*	6	vi
Time Machine, The . .	*H. G. Wells*	15	iv
Toils of Herakles, The	*Rev. G. W. Cox*	17	vi
U			
Undine . .	*Baron De La Motte Fouqué*	4	v
V			
Vathek, History of the Caliph	*W. Beckford*	12	v
W			
Water-Babies, The .	*Charles Kingsley*	10	v
Waterloo	*Victor Hugo*	1	xxxviii
Were-Wolf, The	*Clemence Housman*	5	v
What Was It? . .	*Fitz-James O'Brien*	15	iv
Wondersmith, The .	*Fitz-James O'Brien*	5	vi
Writing on the Image, The	*William Morris*	14	v
Y			
Yarn of the "Nancy Bell,"	*W. S. Gilbert*	2	vi

GENERAL BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX

Vol. 20—31

GENERAL BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX

A	VOL.	PAGE
Adee, Alvey A.	15	vii
Alfred, Lord Tennyson	4	ix
Allingham, William	6	ix
Andersen, Hans Christian	6	ix
"Arabian Nights," The	12	ix
B		
Balzac, Honoré de	19	ix
Barrie, James M.	18	xi
Becke, Louis	16	ix
Beckford, William	12	ix
Browning, Robert	3	xiii
Bryant, William Cullen	7	xi
Bulwer-Lytton, Edward George	5	ix
Burns, Robert	18	xi
C		
Carroll. Lewis	6	ix
Chapman, George	3	xiv
Chatterton, Thomas	3	xv
Church, Alfred J.	7	xi
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor	5	x
Conington, John	17	ix
Cowper, William	9	xi
Cox, Rev. G. W.	17	ix
Craik, Dinah Maria Muloch	6	ix
Cranch, Christopher Pearse	8	xi

	VOL.	PAGE
D		
Dana, Richard Henry	2	ix
Daudet, Alphonse	10	ix
De Berard, Frederick B.	3	xvi
De Forest, J. W.	18	xii
Derby, Earl of (Ed. G. S. Stanley)	7	xi
Dickens, Charles	13	xi
Doyle, Sir Francis Hastings	3	xvi
Drake, Joseph Rodman	6	x
Dryden, John	8	xii
Dumas, Alexandre Davy De La Pailleterie	3	xvii
E		
Edgeworth, Maria	12	x
Edwards, Amelia B.	1	xli
F		
Ferguson, Samuel	18	xii
Fouqué, Frederich, Baron De La Motte	4	ix
Froissart, Sir John	10	ix
Froude, James Anthony	1	xli
G		
Gilbert, William Schwenk	2	ix
Goldsmith, Oliver	20	xiv
H		
Haggard, H. Rider	1	xlii
Hale, Edward Everett	19	x
Halèvy, Ludovic	13	xii
Halleck, Fitz-Greene	3	xviii
Hay, John	3	xviii
Homer	7	xii
Hood, Thomas	19	xi
Housman, Clemence	5	xi
Howitt, Mary	6	x
Hugo, Victor Marie	1	xliii

	VOL.	PAGE
I		
Irving, Washington	1	xliv
J		
Jerome, Jerome K.	20	xv
Johnston, H. H.	16	ix
K		
Kingsley, Rev. Charles	10	x
Kipling, Rudyard	1	xlv
L		
Laboulaye, Edouard	14	ix
Lamb, Charles	13	xii
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth	16	x
Lover, Samuel	2	x
Lytton, Edward George, Lord Bulwer	5	ix
M		
Macaulay, Thomas Babington, Lord	1	xlv
MacGahan, J. A.	1	xlvii
Mackay, Charles	6	x
McNish, Dr. Robert	15	vii
Melville, Herman	2	x
Milton, John	1	xlvii
Miller, Joaquin	3	xix
Mitchell, Donald G.	13	xiii
Mitchell, Edward Page	18	xiii
Morris, William	8	xii
Morrison, Arthur	19	xii
O		
O'Brien, Fitz-James	5	xi
"Ouida" (Louisa De La Ramee)	10	xi
P		
Pembroke, The Earl of	2	xi
Percy, Thomas, Bishop	6	x

	VOL.	PAGE
Plato	3	xix
Pope, Alexander	7	xii
R		
Reade, Charles	2	xi
Ruskin, John	14	ix
Russell, William Howard	1	xlviii
S		
Scott, Sir Walter	1	xlix
Scully, William Charles	16	xi
Shakespeare, William	6	xi
Sheridan, Richard Brinsley	20	xiii
Smith, Alexander	13	xiii
Sterne, Lawrence	13	xiii
Stevenson, Robert Louis Balfour	5	xi
Swettenham, Francis, Athelstane	16	xi
T		
Tennyson, Alfred, Lord	4	ix
Thornbury, George Walter	3	xx
Tolstoy, Count Lyoff Nikolaievitch	13	xiv
V		
Virgil, or Vergil	8	xiii
W		
Watson, H. B. Marriott	18	xiii
Wells, H. G.	15	vii
Weyman, Stanley J.	11	vii
Wilson, John	13	xv
Worsley, Philip Stanhope	9	xii
Y		
Yonge, Charlotte M.	3	xx
Z		
Zschokke, Johann Heinrich Daniel	13	xv

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

C8680s4)444

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

PN De Berard -
6013 Classic tales
D35 by famous auth-
v.20 ors.

PN
6013
D35
v.20